THE AGA KHAN CASE

Religion and Identity in Colonial India

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For Sunny and Sara

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Note on Transliteration

I have omitted diacritical marks other than long vowels from Gujarati, Sanskrit, and the few Arabic and Persian words in the body of the text; these words are italicized (i.e., *Shikshāpatrī* instead of Śikṣāpatrī, *chandāl* instead of chaṇḍāl). Well-known terms, such as imam, Pir, Khoja, Isma'ili, and Vaishnava, have not been italicized and neither have proper names that appear in the poems (such as Nakalanki and Jugesar).

Introduction

In the summer of 2008 I took a trip to Pirana, a village on the outskirts of Ahmedabad Gujarat, to visit the *dargah* of Pir Imam Shah (d. 1520). A *dargah* is a shrine that houses the tomb of a particular Muslim martyr or saint; pilgrims and locals visit these sites to seek blessings or to attend specific religious festivals associated with the life of the saint. Pirana exhibits the typically heterogeneous religious atmosphere characteristic of South Asian *dargahs*, which draw both male and female devotees from various religious persuasions and class backgrounds. Because of their cross-religious and cross-class appeal, scholars often describe *dargahs* as sites of religious syncretism.[1]

Indeed, both Hindu and Muslim forms of religious practice are equally present in Pirana village; Imam Shah's shrine is the focal point of such activity, while the shrine sits adjacent to a mosque, and the immediate vicinity is home to both temples of local deities and tombs of the Pir's family members. However, the shrine at Pirana was not like any other *dargah* I had visited or read about. Recent changes in the architecture emphatically demonstrated that all signs of syncretism had been erased. Everywhere, a single supervening identity was on display. What was evident was that in this place of mixed religious practices, Hinduism had displaced all other forms of devotional expression. The Hindu symbol "Om" had been recently painted on the shrine of Imam Shah. The *dholia*, a sacred room where the Pir had supposedly slept, was now officially

referred to as a *mandir*, a Hindu temple, and was decorated with a patchwork of glossy images of Hindu deities. The most jarring feature of this change was a barbed-wire fence erected to keep the main shrine and the newly constructed Hindu temple separate from the mosque.

Traditionally, the history and practices of *dargahs* have provided South Asia scholars with an opportunity to talk about popular or syncretistic religion, as opposed to communal forms of religion. In this light, the presence of the barbed-wire division graphically illustrated a hardening of spatial divisions between groups that were implicitly being instructed to decide which space was "theirs" and which "others." It suggested a rejection of the multiple, capacious, and contradictory "selves" that seemed to have been implicit in the spirit of worship as it had previously existed. In the absolute divisions imposed, one saw a gradual succumbing to the idea of communalism. Communalism refers to the bounded and exclusive idea of religion that had provided the putative rationale for India's partition in 1947—it was on the grounds that Muslims and Hindus were essentially discrete religious communities that the subcontinent was divided into India and Pakistan. What struck me about the presence of the barbed-wire fence was the way it created space in a new way. It contributed to a separatist ideology of practices it was claiming was self-evidently there. The shrine, in short, had not always been a place of worship that presupposed the fixed and immutable nature of Hindu and Muslim identities. To the contrary, recent events had conspired to constitute identity in this way and to project this relatively new or modern form as an eternal fact. It sought to change and establish on absolute terms the terrain on which new forms of truth might be asserted. Indeed, the fence reminded me of the logic of Partition. There too the subcontinent had been divided into India and Pakistan on the grounds that Muslims and Hindus were fundamentally distinct groups. At Pirana, the fence functions just as the drawn line of Partition that created in its wake the two nations of India and Pakistan, a concrete geographic representation of separate religious entities. By the same token, however, the barbed wire ironically made the produced or artificial character of this mode of historical being painfully obvious. It infused the space with tensions that arise when older modes of worship and self-relation brushed up against the unyielding and bounded presuppositions of "identity." And this, in a sense, is the subject of my book. This book demonstrates two main points: first, that religious identities in the modern period are labels that function to demarcate insiders and outsiders of a particular religious group, and second, that religious beliefs and practices cannot be understood exclusively in the presentist labels of religious identity defined and perpetuated by the modern nation-state. I

am not claiming that people were more tolerant or open about religion in the premodern period. Rather, I argue that the turn to identitarian religion has taken place, and it is necessary that we develop tools to contend with this shift rather than take the new form of religion as a given on the one hand, or wax nostalgic about the worlds we have lost, on the other. Pursuing this study of religion and identity in colonial India calls for an engagement with the multiple strands and values of that earlier moment as they are in tension with current conceptions of modern religious identity.

According to local accounts, the barbed-wire fence I saw running through the temple was built in reaction to the cataclysmic communal violence of 2002. A passenger train returning from a Hindu pilgrimage site to the town of Godhra had been set on fire, and the political leaders and popular media of the Hindu majoritarian state determined that a group of Muslims had engineered the violence. In the aftermath of the train incident, Hindu religious groups inflicted large-scale retaliatory massacres upon Gujarat's Muslim community. Over a thousand people died, the majority of whom were Muslim. Several hundred religious sites, mostly mosques and shrines, were attacked and damaged.

Although Pirana was not itself physically damaged by the events of 2002, the pressures of Gujarat's Hindu majoritarian policies have undoubtedly had their effect. I came to the view that the increasingly communalized politics of Gujarat would have been superimposed onto the landscape of Pirana in a manner that was not responsive to the texture of local practices and dispositions. My suspicions only grew when I spoke to people at the site about how they saw themselves in relation to the *dargah*. When I asked them whether they were Hindu or Muslim, leaders and devotees of the Pirana shrine responded with either "both" or "neither." When pushed a little more to define their religious practices, their most frequent answer was "Satpanth." Satpanth is a Gujarati/Hindi idiomatic phrase meaning literally "true path," and it is the name used to describe both the teachings Pir Imam Shah reportedly imparted some six hundred years ago, and the set of everyday religious practices that devotees of Imam Shah observe. The devotees' responses to my question about religious identity lent credence to the view that the form of religion the barbed-wire fence was attempting to put in place at Pirana was novel and unfamiliar to devotees. It sought to distinguish the Satpanth tradition along Hindu and Muslim lines—a distinction that found no resonance in the history of the *dargah*.

For several years I had been working on a project that concerned the *gināns*. *Gināns* refer to devotional poetry composed in late medieval India primarily in the languages of Gujarati, Hindustani, and Sindhi.[2]

They are an essential part of Satpanth ritual. Until my visit to Pirana, I had only studied these poems as texts, in the narrow sense of words written on paper. Nonetheless, I was intrigued by the ways in which the words on the page synthesized religious ideas from a number of different traditions without giving the impression that such syntheses were either forced or contradictory. I could not help wondering how the fascinating constellation of beliefs and practices that came together in the poems would be manifested in a performance setting, that is, at a place of worship and ritualized practices. And so it came as a rude shock when the *ginān*s I heard at Pirana in 2008 were sung exclusively in devotion to Hindu deities and recited only in a Hindu temple.

Today, the Satpanth tradition is defined through unmistakably identitarian categories of religion: Hindu and Muslim. This book is my attempt to describe the consequences of this transformation as diverse practices give way to modern notions of religious identity—a process which only began to take shape and acquire meaning in the nineteenth century. To this end, this book tells the story of the nineteenth century Isma'ili community as a way to illustrate this turn to identity. Prior to the nineteenth century, the Indian Isma'ilis defined themselves primarily in terms of their caste identification, as Khojas. Moreover, they were practitioners of the Satpanth tradition, which defies Hindu and Muslim the identity labels. After 1866, however, this changed. In the famous Aga Khan Case of 1866, the Khojas were redefined as "Isma'ili Muslim" and so too were Satpanth religious practices. The terms of modern Muslim identity decided by the colonial state work against the more capacious identifications of an earlier moment in the life of the Isma'ili community. Instead of understanding Isma'ilis as Muslim, in so far as they fit into a pre-existing logic of "Muslimness," I argue that a study of their religious practices as outlined in the *ginān*s allows us to capture an earlier moment in the life of this community that incorporates, rather than denies, heterogeneity.

The Aga Khan Case of 1866

In 1866, a group of leaders from the Khoja caste filed a suit against the Aga Khan, who claimed to be the religious leader of the Khojas. Although many Khojas recognized the Aga Khan as an object of devotion, the caste leaders of this group opposed his presence in the community because he demanded payments and sought to control caste affairs. The Aga Khan was a Persian nobleman and exile who came to India because he worked for the British army in the 1840s. The Khojas were a caste—that is, a particular social grouping based on ties of endogamy, occupation, language, and religious practices. Until the 1860s, the Khoja caste followed customs drawn from both Hindu and Muslim traditions. After 1866, however, when the Khojas were identified as part of the Isma'ili sect of Islam by the British court, they began to define themselves according to this state-mandated identity. Prior to the court ruling of 1866, the Khojas did not identify themselves in terms of a *single* religious identity, though they no doubt employed other and multiple forms of identification. Their terms of religious belonging were redefined when the administrative category "Isma'ili" was legally constituted.

The Aga Khan Case of 1866 was officially a property dispute. However, in the course of the trial, the presiding judge, Justice Arnould, found it necessary to determine the religious identity of the Khojas before he resolved the issue of property ownership. In order to undermine the Aga Khan's authority and role in the community, the caste leaders filed a case claiming that the property of the Khojas belonged only to members of the Khoja caste, and since the Aga Khan was not a Khoja, he had no right to intervene in caste and property issues. The disagreements between the two sides centered specifically on control of caste affairs, property ownership, and the payment of revenues. Despite this, both the plaintiffs and the defense were required to make a case about the religious identity of the Khojas. Justice Arnould sided with the defense, officially proclaiming that the Khojas and the Aga Khan were Shi'i Isma'ili. As part of that decision, he concluded that the property of the Khoja caste belonged to the Aga Khan.

Crucial for my study are two questions: First, how was this religious identity of the Khojas established, and second, why was it necessary to establish a religious identity in a property dispute? Arnould officially declared the religious identity of the Khojas as "Isma'ili Muslim" through an interpretation of poetry. One of the key documents through which the defense argued their case for Khoja identity as Isma'ili was the text *Dasavatār*. *Dasavatār*, the Ten Avatars, is a poem of the *ginān* genre discussed above. The poem is a Gujarati/Hindi vernacular rendering of the classical Sanskrit story of the ten avatars of Vishnu and was transmitted and finally transcribed in the early eighteenth century.[3] It was a central document in the trial because both the plaintiffs and the defense described the poem as the single most important religious text of the Khojas. The defense lawyers, however, schematized *Dasavatār* in such a way as to show that Khojas were specifically Isma'ili Muslim. They pointed to the fact that although the first nine chapters narrate stories of Hindu avatars, the final chapter distinctly focuses on Ali, the first Shi'i imam.

This transition within *Dasavatār*, they argued, proved that the Khojas were Hindu converts to Isma'ili Islam. Justice Arnould agreed with the defense's reading of *Dasavatār* and decided that the Khojas were Isma'ili Muslim. He arrived at the conclusion that this particular theological division in the text demonstrated the history and identity of Khojas as Hindu converts to Isma'ili Islam.[4]

At one stroke, Justice Arnould redefined the Khojas as converts and the *ginān Dasavatār* as a conversion text. The judge's authoritative interpretation of *Dasavatār* thus divided the poem into two parts, one Hindu and one Muslim, a reading that was utterly novel; it demarcated categories of Hindu and Muslim, creating a Muslim identity for the Khojas. As I explain below, this identity label has been naturalized within the community as well as in scholarship on Islam.

My account of Isma'ili identity formation provides a much more complicated picture of the Khoja community than the portrait arrived at by the colonial court in 1866. The religious ideas and practices of the Khojas, as outlined in *Dasavatār* and other *gināns*, are identified not as "Isma'ili" but as Satpanth—the same terms the devotees at Pirana use to define their practices. I read these poems to show how the Satpanth tradition enacts certain formulations of South Asian Islam that cannot be extrapolated through the language of "sect" that the court used to identify the Khojas in 1866 and which continues in scholarly discussions of Isma'ili identity today. I draw attention to the historically complex character of this community through a study of their religious texts without reproducing the sectarian frame that has been imposed on it.

The Enduring Effects of 1866

The 1866 decision that Khojas were Muslim in the modern identitarian sense has had lasting repercussions for the self-identification of the Isma'ili community. In the early twentieth century, the third Aga Khan, Sultan Muhammad Shah (1877–1957), mandated a series of Islamicized reforms within the community, most notably the production of an official canon of their ritual texts, the *gināns*, in print. This canon was marked by a series of changes such as the discarding of "Hindu" names (Hari, Krishna, etc.), and the introduction of new Islamic ones. And today, the current Aga Khan, Prince Karim Aga Khan IV (1936–), has further Islamicized the Isma'ili liturgical setting by changing the language of service from the vernacular Gujarati to Arabic, mandating greater use of the Qur'an,[5] and most recently, banning all "Hinduistic" *gināns*, including *Dasavatār*.[6]

This legal outcome has come to set the terms of scholarly discussions as well. Scholars who work on the *gināns* today accept the interpretation of the poems as Isma'ili conversion texts, thereby affirming the ahistorical supposition of identity.[7] This position is exemplified in the explanation of the *gināns* given by the Isma'ili studies historian Farhad Daftary:

> On the evidence of the *gināns*, the pirs did attempt ingeniously to maximise the appeal of their message in a Hindu ambiance, for the Nizari *da'wa* in India was addressed mainly to the rural, and largely uneducated, lower castes. Therefore, the pirs from early on turned to Indian vernaculars, rather than Arabic and Persian used by the educated classes, in order to enhance the effectiveness and spread of their message. . . . In other words, the pirs adopted a strategy of accommodating indigenous religious mores and concepts . . . that proved very successful and won masses of converts among Sind's lower castes.[8]

Daftary's position is typical of Isma'ili studies scholarship in that it assumes two crucial points about the *ginān* tradition: that its origin was Nizari (Persian), and that in the context of India, the pirs of the Isma'ili mission attracted "converts" by strategically spreading their message through the language of a "Hindu ambiance." From this perspective, the *gināns* represent the encounter between two separate religious traditions: Hindu and Isma'ili. This interpretation divides the *gināns* into two parts and thus gives primacy to the conversion argument. In short, it replicates without question the exact logic of the legal ruling of the Aga Khan Case. Daftary asserts that the use of Hindu names and figures are merely pragmatic. Even the most sophisticated works in Isma'ili studies scholarship treat Hindu elements in the poems as facilitating conversion.[9] This tradition of scholarship, which has defined the frames in which the *gināns* are understood, has not questioned the conversion reading and the prevailing and often unstated assumption that *gināns* represent an extension of and continuum with Persian Isma'ilism. I do not suggest that this is a willful act of occlusion, but rather, I want to point to the tacit ways in which the dominant arguments about conversion are shaped and have enduring force; they preserve a Persian pedigree and alienate the Indic context. I argue, instead, that Indic ideas in the *gināns* are not just part of the "ambiance" but, rather, the primary conduits of Satpanth Islam, and that the vernacular is not a "strategy" but the linguistic medium of Satpanth religious expression.

Before I describe my approach to Satpanth Islam and the *gināns*, it is important to provide a brief explanation of the study of Islam and religious identity formation in the South Asian colonial context. The scholarly investment in locating the origins of the *gināns* in the Middle

Eastern context is part of a long tradition of Arab-centrism in the study of Islam. This Arab bias can be attributed to the problem that Islam has been understood chiefly through its origins, that is, as a primarily Arab or Middle Eastern phenomenon that spread outwards. The assumption, then, is that Islam is essentially Arab. As early as the Crusades, Islam came to be conflated with a narrowly defined and monolithic Arab character.[10] Although it has a long history, it was in the nineteenth century that this point of view gained its authority. Pioneering work in Arabic language and literature by famous European Orientalists came to define the European perspective on Islam.[11] As colonial powers began to dominate the Muslim world, beginning in the eighteenth century, Asiatic societies were established in India and Chairs for the study of Arabic were founded in European universities. Famous Orientalists such as Ignaz Goldziher, Julius Wellhausen, Louis Massignon, and Reynold Nicholson studied Islamic civilization through philological mastery of Arabic. This preoccupation with Arabic texts led to a particular tendency to prioritize the "classical" age of Islam as a "golden" tradition. From this perspective, historical periods in the later expansion of Islam were considered irrelevant to or derivative of its Arab origin and center.

Alongside origins theory, Christianity has served as an equally significant conceptual frame through which Europeans defined non-Western religious traditions.[12] In the Aga Khan Case, the distinctions between "church" and "sect" provided the paradigm through which Justice Arnould decided the religious identity of the Khojas. In the classical Western division between church and sect, "church" represents a corporate center and sects are groups that break off from the official center while retaining certain elements fundamental to the doctrines of the "church."[13] Arnould identified the Khojas as a Muslim "sect." Classifying the Khojas as a "sect" assumes that there is an equivalent "church" in Islam. According to Arnould, Sunni Islam was the "church," and Isma'ili Islam was a "sect" of the Shi'a. The Khojas were inserted into this classificatory scheme, that is, placed into an already systemized idea of Islam in which the Arab world was its center, on the one hand, and where internal differences within the tradition were defined through the alien template of "church" versus "sect."Justice Arnould's conception of religion was identitarian. He alleged that Khojas must have *a* religious identity, that is, a *single* religious identity.[14] The Khojas could only be Hindu *or* Muslim, and if Muslim, they must be Sunni or Shi'i. The Khojas were thus defined in "communal" terms.[15] In this way his understanding of "religion" served the same epistemic function as the census category of "caste"—both were identitarian terms adopted by colonial officials to map the practices of colonial subjects.[16] It is necessary

to underscore that this new designation of the Khojas as "Isma'ili Muslim" was a legal, that is, political, identity.[17] Just as in Africa colonial categories of "race" and "tribe" came to define both the legal and discursive terms of community identity in the modern period, colonial categories of religion legally defined the Khojas as "Isma'ili."[18]

I should stress that I am not claiming that there was no community identity prior to the Khojas being defined by the colonial state as "Isma'ili." My point is that "Isma'ili" is a label that was officially designated by the colonial state, and that this religious identity label Arnould chose was informed by a peculiar and circumscribed logic that could not account for the various cultural identifications of the Khojas; it denied the legitimacy of the Satpanth tradition. Therefore, I draw a distinction between the state's legal definition of the Khojas' religion as "Isma'ili Muslim" and how the Khojas' religious texts, *ginans*, convey religion through the idea of the Satpanth.

Satpanth as Qur'anic Refraction

In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Ever Merciful
All Praises to Allah, Lord of the Universe
The Most Gracious, the Most Merciful
Sovereign of the Day of Judgment
You alone we worship. You alone we ask for help
Guide us to the true path
The path of those on whom you have bestowed your favor, not of those who have earned your anger, nor of those who go astray
(Qur'an 1: 1–7)

These verses of the Qur'an recited globally in the daily prayer are part of the opening *Surah* known as the *al-Fatiha*. The subject of this *Surah* is the *Sirat al-Mustaqim*, what can be translated as the "true path." Current Western scholarship on Islamic theology explicates the meaning of the "true path" through a primarily Arab-centric sociocultural framework, most notably "the five pillars of Islam."[19] As a consequence of the Orientalist legacy discussed above, there has yet to be a substantial investigation of the various local translations of the "true path" outside the Arab milieu. While some studies of Islamic theology offer brief discussions on Shi'i, Sufi, or "popular" Islam, rarely do they analyze literary sources or rituals outside of the Arab context as part of what the "true path"—the beliefs and practices of Muslims—entails. The alternative paradigm I offer is to read the Satpanth as a refraction of Qur'anic ideas in the local Indian context.

The primacy given to Arabic in the study of Islam is understandable: not only is Arabic the language in which the Qur'an was revealed to Prophet Muhammad, but the sacredness of Arabic is affirmed by the text's explicit stance about its nontranslatability. Despite this official position on translation, Qur'anic ideas were nevertheless translated outside the Arab world. Precisely because literal translations were prohibited, Qur'anic concepts were transmitted through new artistic media when Islam expanded outside the Arab milieu.[10] It would make sense to describe *ginān* poetry as "Islamicate"—the term Marshall Hodgson uses to refer to the larger body of creative expression that was produced in the various geographic contexts in which Islam spread.[11] However, the poems are not just artifacts of a particular historical moment, as is, for example, the Taj Mahal, the masterpiece of Mughal architecture. The *ginān*s offer specific insights into how Islam indigenized in the Indic milieu, a process I describe as Qur'anic refraction. While *Sirat-al-Mustaqim* and Satpanth can both be translated as "true path," the latter is not simply the Gujarati version of the former. The *ginān*s are part of the body of diverse literary forms that emerged in Indian vernacular languages against the background of the Sanskrit tradition.[12] Satpanth, the name given to the religious path in the *ginān*s, also refers to a community of devotees, which, similar to other *panth* and *bhakti* communities, cohered around specific poets, conceptions of gods, and criticisms of Brahmanic ideas in the late medieval/early modern period.[13] My claim is that the Satpanth exhibits the synthesis of two historical processes in microcosm, first, the expansion of Islam, and second, vernacular "panth" response to religious ideas of the classical Sanskrit tradition. The ideas associated with the former are Qur'anic, and that of the latter are Indic, but in Satpanth tradition, they coalesce in an altogether new and singular way. What I propose is that the perspective of the Satpanth offers a different way to think about the past than the terms of "identity." Learning to think in this new way is crucial to an understanding of how Islam exists in the world, as much a historical and a contemporary phenomenon.

Scholars of South Asian religions have addressed the issue of Indo-Islamic encounter in the literature of medieval and early modern India, and many of these studies, especially those that focus on Punjab and Bengal, deploy syncretism as a conceptual framework.[14] I take up a discussion of syncretism at length in Chapter 3, but let me just state here that Richard Eaton's discussion about syncretism and the seventeenth-century Bengali text *Nabi Vamsha* is a useful starting point and most closely illustrates my own approach. He explains that although Bengali deities and Hebrew

prophets figure equally in *Nabi Vamsha*, this story of "the family of the prophet" (its literal translation) draws primarily from Judeo-Islamic ideas.[15] That is to say, even though the content is Indian, the essential message and form remain Qur'anic. One of my central arguments about *Dasavatār* is that it too replicates the particular dialectic of Qur'anic theology, whereby the Qur'an is deemed wholly dependent on its theological antecedents while at the same time abrogating the ultimate authority of those antecedents.

Yet *Dasavatar* does not simply reinscribe the Qur'anic message. Eaton's argument about the formal replication of Qur'anic ideas is centered within a specifically Sunni conception of time, as his argument about *Nabi Vamsha* rests on the assumption that all prophetic possibility concludes with Muhammad's death—the geographic context of which is Arab or "Judeo-Islamic."[16] Unlike the *Nabi Vamsha*, where the Sunni conception of time ends with the death of the prophet Muhammad in the Arab context, the Shi'i theology of *Dasavatār* allows for movement out of the Arab context.[17]

The ways in which *Dasavatār* juxtaposes local and Arab concepts and figures is reminiscent of what Vasudha Narayanan has argued about the seventeenth-century Tamil text, *Cirapurrānam*. Narayanan explains how *Cirapurrānam* "manipulates" the Indian literary genre, the *purāṇanam*, to convey the life of the Prophet, a figure who lived in a foreign land.[18] Similarly, *Dasavatār* adopts the literary genre of the *purāṇas*, not to convey the life of the Prophet, but rather to deliver a message of messianic Imami Shi'ism[19] within the context of Vaishnava theology.[20] In *Dasavatār*, this Shi'i/Vaishnava message is instantiated in the culminating event of the story, where a confrontation takes place between good and evil armies.[21] The protagonist of the story, described as the tenth avatar, emerges from occultation to confront the evil demon Kalingo.[22] In *Dasavatār*, the central Shi'i movement out of occultation transpires between two geographic spaces—Arab and Indian lands. At the start of the poem, we are told that the tenth avatar resides in an "Arab desh" but the actual confrontation and the great social transformation takes place in India.[23] When the tenth avatar comes to India, Imamate ideology is localized, concretized, and given meaning in the Indic space. This Imamate perspective creates a shift in epicenter from the Arab to the Indian context. The Imamate teaching in *Dasavatār* thereby illustrates how a foundational idea of the Qur'an—the centrality of prophecy—takes on a distinctive form in its new context. This process of refraction of Qur'anic ideas into the Indic Satpanth worldview is not only conceptual; it has historical and cultural implications for the study of communities as well.

Satpanth and Overlapping Circles of Community

As I explained earlier, religion, like caste, ultimately assumed a new epistemic function in nineteenth-century India. In order to understand this shift, it is necessary to reflect upon the idea of religion prior to the onset of modernity. Sudipta Kaviraj has provided a helpful analysis for understanding the differences between traditional and modern societies in India, an argument through which it is possible to think about religion before colonial modernity. Kaviraj argues that relations of authority in precolonial India were segmented. In this arrangement, the state was no doubt present, but removed from everyday life. "[The state] enjoyed great ceremonial eminence, but in fact it had rather limited powers to interfere with the social segment's internal organization."[33] Kaviraj describes traditional communities as "fuzzy," as opposed to modern society, which is "enumerated." In using the word "fuzzy," Kaviraj does not mean vague, as he explains how one's "social worlds" would be extremely precise. "Fuzzy" refers to the social structure in which an individual could describe himself as belonging to a particular village, caste, or religious group, or as belonging to more than one of these various layers of a community.

The concept of a "fuzzy community" is one way to think about the Khojas in nineteenth-century Bombay. Prior to the period in which the disputes were taken to court, the state did not interfere in the affairs of the Khojas. This is not to say there would not have been conflicts, disagreements about group structure and organization would have been negotiated from within the community. As I noted above, the Khojas cohered as a group through ties of endogamy, occupation, language, and, religious practices. Until the 1860s, the Khoja caste abided by customs drawn from both Hindu and Muslim traditions. Certain practices—such as the inheritance of property, dress, and particular ceremonies associated with the birth of a child—were Hindu in orientation, and other practices, such as marriage, were Muslim. Moreover, in the trial, some Khojas described themselves as Sunni and others described themselves as Shi'i. When the disputes were taken to the High Court and the colonial state decided that the Khojas were "Isma'ili Muslim," the Khojas had to accept the new terms of identification authorized by the state if they wanted to remain within the community. This new idea of religious belonging was "enumerated" insofar as it located the Khojas within a preexisting order of Fatimid and Persian Isma'ilism. This enumeration relied on an interpretation of *Dasavatār* that situated the text as part of a continuum of Persian Isma'ilism. If we examine these texts from the perspective of the Satpanth tradition, however—the religious worldview that, as I will show, can best make sense of

these compositions—their definitive identification as the bearers of a Persian Isma'ili lineage would not be possible. This is because Satpanth cannot be entirely reconciled with any single conception of religious identity, whether Hindu, Muslim, Sunni, or Shi'i. Consequently, when the Khojas were declared "Isma'ili," the Satpanth tradition of practices became redefined as "Isma'ili" as well. Once the Khojas were identified by the state as Muslim and specifically, in sectarian terms as Isma'ili, it became increasingly difficult to identify with practices that were officially deemed Hindu, Sunni, or Satpanth.

This effacement of earlier Satpanth cultural practices occurred not only with Isma'ili identity formation, but among the Swami Narayan Hindus as well. When I went to Pirana in 2008, members of the Pirana Satpanth community told me that the founder of the Vaisnava Hindu Swami Narayan movement, Sahajanand Swami, spent time at Pirana as a Satpanthi before he started his own Swami Narayan religion in the early nineteenth century. There is no support for this argument among scholars of the Swami Narayan *sampradāya*. However, as the 1897 gazetteer entry on Pirana reports, there were certainly connections between Swami Narayans and Satpanthis at Pirana in the nineteenth century:

> The Pirana worshippers belong to three classes, foreign Musalmans, local converts and Hindus. Of local converts there are three classes, Momnas, Shekhs or Shekhdas, and Mat a Kaabas. . . . The Shekhs or Shekhdas, except that they bury the dead, differ little from Hindus. They are not circumcised, and do not eat with Musalmans, they wear forehead marks, and many of them belong to the Swami Narayan community.[34]

As part of his analysis of premodern society, Kaviraj provides a specific image of a circle of circles to elaborate upon this idea of "fuzzy community." Each circle or community consists of a mix of caste, religious denomination, and occupation.[35] The above excerpt from the entry on Pirana illustrates how this would work: multiple caste groups reside in one village, and each caste group adheres to its own set of practices. After this discussion of the various caste groups and their different ritual practices, the gazetteer explains that there is one text that is read by everyone, despite caste differences: "The book of religious precepts, *shiksha patri*, written by Imam Shah, is supposed to be read by all."[36] This shared text, *Shikshāpatrī*, is both the name of a *ginān* as well as name of the Swami Narayan foundational text. In the fourth chapter I explore the parallels and affinities between Swami Narayans and Satpanthis to argue that the Swami Narayan sect, like the Isma'ili sect, was a historical formation that became enumerated within an identitarian frame in the context of nineteenth-century colonial rule, through popular support of a charismatic

leader, and, from the perspective of Satpanth history, [illegible] interaction with the Satpanth milieu.

Returning to Kaviraj's discussion, he also uses the concept of circles to explain the role of Islam in Indian society, which is crucial for trying to understand how the Khoja community was Muslim [illegible] d since from the court's understanding of their religious [illegible] Kaviraj describes how communities in premodern [illegible] selves in relation to new independent circles. Muslims, [illegible] would not ally have entered Indian society as an independent circle which would operate in "a kind of back-to-back agency with the rest [illegible] very peculiar combination of absorption and [illegible] situates Muslim culture as an "adjacent" circle as a way to argue against standard nationalist historiography, which assumes that Islam has historically absorbed outsiders, specifically Muslims, into an Indian/Hindu fold. With the Khoja case, it would be both inaccurate and reductive to say that the Khojas were Hindu—even in the most expansive definition of "Hindu"—prior to 1866. They were, no doubt, Muslim, but not in an exclusively sectarian fashion as that determined by the state. Their practices of Islam would have originated as an independent circle that over time indigenized as the Indic vernacular Satpanth through the absorbing and rejecting of local beliefs and practices.

Kaviraj's theory of how Islam acculturated in the premodern Indian context is corroborated by Richard Eaton's historical study of conversion to Islam in Bengal and Punjab—the two most densely populated Muslim regions in the world outside Indonesia.[14] Eaton's discussion of two key socio-historical processes, accretion and reform, are relevant to an understanding of how exactly the *gināns* can be understood in connection to the question of conversion. He explains how, in the premodern accretion mode of conversion, Muslim/Islamicate forms and concepts were mapped onto earlier and older cosmological ideas. It was therefore possible to understand oneself as Muslim, and the same time, participate in devotional practices to other local deities.[15] The later modern reform mode of conversion, however, was characterized by a much more self-conscious awareness of identity, whereby a particular community would adhere to a single model for social action, resist participation in non-Muslim rituals, and follow practices that were removed from its ancestral locality.[16] The *gināns* were composed in a similar hinterland cultural milieu and exhibit the same kind of acculturative "mapping" of Islamicate ideas—what I have describe as Qur'anic refraction. The Aga Khan Case, however, officially put an end to the accretive understanding of the *gināns*. *Dasavatār* functioned as an official document in the colonial court, ultimately serving as a textual rationale for the decision that Khojas were converts to Isma'ilism. The [illegible] reading of the *Dasavatār ginān* activated by the colonial [illegible] and later assimilated in the scholarly reception of the *ginān* [illegible] disaggregated *Dasavatār* into discrete Hindu and Muslim [illegible] new reading and demarcation of religious identity was [illegible] setting the reform stage in motion. Under the direction of Aga [illegible] III, the newly defined Isma'ili community was encouraged to [illegible] a more global idea of Islam, and discard practices associated with Hinduism.

One final point [illegible] to where this discussion began: the comparison between premodern and modern religion cannot fall back on the assumption that premodern religiosity represents a syncretistic and thus more tolerant alternative to its modern counterpart. Study of premodern religion requires rather a distinct hermeneutic that can account for historically diverse forms of ritual and devotional expression. The concept of conversion illustrates this point. Conversion in the premodern period was an extended and uneven *process* of adopting and rejecting foreign ideas within a local cultural milieu. By contrast, conversion in the Aga Khan Case was enacted in a *moment* that was both totalizing and divisive. In 1866, the Khojas were legally constituted as converts, and consequently, they had to decide whether they would abide by the new terms of Isma'ili identity decided by the court or secede from the group. The "converts" here were colonial subjects whose self-understanding transformed as a consequence of a legal ruling.[17] "Conversion" was their official induction into global and simultaneously culturally alien ideas of religion and European modernity. This conversion required an acceptance of and participation in a modern form of identitarian religion that naturalized and legitimized even further over time.

Outline of the Book

The first chapter, "Prehistories of the Isma'ili Sect in Nineteenth-Century Bombay," introduces the series of conflicts within the Khoja community that began in 1830 and culminated in the case of 1866. The chapter begins with a discussion of the Aga Khan's history with the British government, the Khoja community setup in Bombay, and the conflicts that transpired between the Aga Khan and Bombay Khoja leaders in the years prior to 1866. The chapter then analyzes the judgment of the first official dispute between the Khoja leaders and the Aga Khan in 1847. The judge, Justice Perry, sided with the Khoja leaders, who claimed that the custom of

inheritance in practice ought to continue as such—in opposition to the Aga Khan's position, which insisted on changing the custom of inheritance along the lines of Qur'anic law. As Perry's conclusions about Khojas and *Dasavatār* are invoked as precedent in 1866, the chapter explores Perry's adjudicative rationale, according to which he provided a preliminary sketch of Khoja identity and declared *Dasavatār* to be the central religious text of the Khojas.

The second chapter of the book, "Sectarian Showdown in the Aga Khan Case of 1866," describes how the Aga Khan Case of 1866 marks the juncture at which new colonial state policies and the long-standing history of conflicts between the Khojas and the Aga Khan took place under very different legal and political conditions than those in 1847. In the judgment of 1847, *Dasavatār* was introduced as the "religious work" of the Khojas. In 1866, the poem was accorded an even more significant role by the judge: as the text that facilitated the conversion of the Khojas from Hinduism to Islam. Tracing the presentation of both the defense and the plaintiffs' arguments in 1866, I focus on the terms of the debate in the trial—whether Khojas were Sunni or Shi'i—and in particular, how the *ginān Dasavatār* ultimately formed the basis from which the Aga Khan's party shaped an elaborate historical narrative about the Khojas as "Shi'a Imami Isma'ilis" and defeated the plaintiffs.

Since both sides in the 1866 trial explained that *gināns* such as *Dasavatār* were invoked as part of Khoja religious rituals, one of the main arguments of the book is to demonstrate why *Dasavatār* and *ginān* poetry ought to be read from the perspective of religious practice. The third chapter, "Reading Satpanth against the Judicial Archive," contends that the *gināns* allow us to imagine the historically complex character of the Khojas' beliefs and practices prior to the nineteenth century, without reproducing the identitarian or sectarian frame that has been imposed on them. The chapter also addresses how subjects of the nineteenth-century disputes—the question of the Aga Khan's authority and the tradition of payments to the Aga Khan—can be understood as part of a longer history of Satpanth devotional practices, such as paying the tithe and of devotion to a long-awaited imam.

The fourth chapter, "Comparative Formations of the Hindu Swami Narayan 'Sect,'" explores the connections between Isma'ili and Swami Narayan "sect" formations. I examine the role that charismatic leadership and the Satpanth milieu played in the formation of a Hindu sect in nineteenth-century colonial India. The founder of the Swami Narayan sect, Sahajanand Swami, established himself as a charismatic leader among certain castes of Gujarat in the nineteenth century. Although the primarily

theological basis upon which he did so was Vaishnava and Hindu, I show how from the perspective of Satpanth historical memory, his "circle" or community of Swami Narayans overlapped with Satpanthis.

The concluding chapter, "Sect and Secularism in the Early Nationalist Period," examines the legacy of Isma'ili Muslim identity formation and its connection to Muslim identity politics in the early twentieth century through an extensive discussion of the life and teachings of Aga Khan III (1877–1957). Aga Khan III, also known as Sultan Muhammad Shah, was the Imam of the Isma'ili community who officially commissioned the production of a printed canon of *gināns* in 1900. This directive was accompanied by a series of prescribed changes to the *gināns*, such as the discarding of "Hindu" names (Hari, Krishna, etc.) and the insertion of Islamic ones. I engage in a comparative study of the "Islamicized" canonical *gināns* with those that represent the vernacular history of the poetic tradition to investigate the ways in which the Aga Khan constituted new terms of Isma'ili devotion. Sultan Muhammad Shah was also a political and religious leader during this early nationalist period. His public discussions about Islam were informed by secular values of the colonial public sphere, such as Western education, participation in political life, and the privatization of religion. Sultan Muhammad Shah steered his political efforts in the direction of separatist politics, where he played an integral role in pushing for the installation of separate electorates for Muslims, and as first president of the All India Muslim League. I use this discussion of Sultan Muhammad Shah's identitarian politics to examine how reformist or secular Islam rationalizes older and vernacular expressions of religiosity. Through readings of *Dasavatār*, I show how these earlier precolonial formations of Islam dislodge and undermine the identitarian cast of the politically instrumental idea of Islam in the modern period.

CHAPTER ONE

Prehistories of the Isma'ili Sect in Nineteenth-Century Bombay

He is a God—his income immense. He lets none of his sect kiss his hand under twenty rupees, and is the greatest rascal possible: that is, a clever brave man, but being a God makes a virtue of any sin he likes to commit. I speak truly when saying that his followers do not and dare not refuse him any favour he asks. wives, daughters, slaves, money, houses, furniture, are all his, and he doesn't let the priests grow rusty. He could kill me if he pleased, he has only to say the word and one of his people would do the job in a twinkling and go straight to heaven for the same. He is too shrewd for that however, and they all have a great fear of me since the battles.

Sir Charles Napier to Governor-General of India, Earl of Ellenborough. 1843

CHARLES NAPIER, Major General of Bombay Presidency, captured Sindh province in 1843. It was at this time that Napier wrote to Lord Ellenborough about the Aga Khan, who provided crucial military support to Napier. The Aga Khan was employed by the British colonial state in 1841, when he met Major Henry Rawlinson, the military officer who worked for the commission in Persia from 1834 to 1838 and subsequently served as political agent in Qandahar. After Rawlinson met the Aga Khan in Qandahar, Rawlinson wrote to Sir William Macnaghten, the British Envoy stationed in Kabul, with the suggestion that the Aga Khan play a strategic role on behalf of the British colonial government: "Should the Persian Government be still inclined to assert its rights of sovereignty over Herat . . . I cannot avoid seeing that the entertainment of the Aga Khan at Candahar may operate greatly to our advantage as a means of intimidation over the Courts of Tehran."[1]

By the time Napier wrote to Ellenborough in 1843, the Aga Khan's alliance with the British, as a soldier and spy, had been well established. However, the question of his religious identity, specifically to whom he was considered a "God," was yet to be officially decided. More than twenty years later, the religious identity of the Aga Khan would be legally defined: in what became known as the Aga Khan Case of 1866,

the Bombay High Court ruled that the Aga Khan was imam of the Shi'i Isma'ili Muslim sect.

The encounter between Rawlinson and the Aga Khan in 1841 marked the beginning of the Aga Khan's relationship with the British Crown. After meeting Rawlinson in 1841, the Aga Khan wrote to Macnaghten to explain the military and political possibilities he could foresee from an alliance with the British—specifically, the complete conquest of Persia.

> I will undertake the conquest of Iraq, Fars, Kerman, and Khorasan. I will seize the country without the least trouble. If it be your intention to take Persia, I pledge myself to explain it without loss to you, either from the direction of Khorasan or the sea-port of Kermaun and Fars. No fighting will be necessary. The people in general and the disaffected persons will not delay to assist; and the regular army, should object, you are at peace with Persia and I can assure you that it is known in that Country that I have friends in Candahar, Bamiyan, Cabool, and Hindoostan. Allow me to assemble a body of men and having been joined by those in Persia take that kingdom—I will proceed to conquer by the seaports, Kerman, Fars, Bum, and Luristan. If you think this plan . . . advisable you must lend assistance in some way or another. That I may prepare myself to take the Country and after this is done as Persia will be attached to the British Government.

Rawlinson and the Aga Khan shared the same political and geographic interest in destabilizing Persian power. But while Rawlinson's strategy to arrest Persia's role into Afghanistan was defensive, the Aga Khan's aspirations were pointedly expansionist. The Aga Khan, born as Hasan Ali Shah, was a Persian politician, soldier, and holy man who rose to prominence under Qajar rule. He inherited this religio-political role from his father, Shah Khalilullah (1790–1818), the first Isma'ili Imam to appear almost five centuries after the fall of the last Isma'ili stronghold of Alamut.[2] Khalilullah reclaimed the seat of the Persian Isma'ili Imamate with political support from the Qajar monarch Fath Ali Shah (1797–1834), who appointed Khalilullah governor of Yazd. Khalilullah, however, was detested by the people of Yazd and was subsequently murdered at their hands in 1818.[4] To compensate for his father's death, Fath Ali Shah proclaimed Khalilullah's son, Hasan Ali Shah, governor of two provinces, Mahallat and Qom.[5] Fath Ali Shah gave Hasan Ali Shah his royal title "Aga Khan" as well as one of his daughters, Satv-i-Jahan Khanum, in marriage.[6]

When Fath Ali Shah died, the monarchy transferred to his grandson and successor, Muhammad Shah, who appointed Hasan Ali Shah governor of Kirman. Hasan Ali Shah had acquired an armed following from quite early on, but during the rule of Muhammad Shah, he declared the first of a series of rebellions against the Qajar government. While governor

in Mahallat he had gathered his own force of troops, and upon arrival in Kirman, he instigated an uprising in 1837 and another one in 1840. The Aga Khan claimed that he had launched these revolts because of the oppressive nature of the Persian government, as he wrote in a letter to a British official: "All the respectable people and nobles of Persia, particularly those of Iraq, Fars and Kerman have been reduced to the lowest ebb of vexatious misery, the whole body of learned men, governors and chiefs induced me to throw off the yoke of the Persian allegiance and protect the wretched people, assist them to recover their privileges, so that the tyranny of the government might cease and the people of the county might not be destroyed."[14]

It remains unclear whether the British were in contact with Hasan Ali Shah for strategic military operations before Rawlinson met him in 1841.[15] When the Aga Khan wrote to Macnaghten, however, he knew that the British were interested in forging alliances in the region.[16] Starting in the early nineteenth century, with Sir John Malcolm's mission to Persia in 1808, the British advocated a strategic position in the Persian Gulf that would make it possible to upset the stability in Persia in case of any dispute between Persia and India. In the earlier years of British rule in India, the colonial government was preoccupied with keeping Persia as a strong buffer against foreign invaders, such as the French, and later, the Russians. By the time of Macnaghten and Rawlinson, however, the British had become increasingly troubled by the threat of Persia's expansion. They were no longer concerned with foreign invaders, nor were they interested, as Hasan Ali Shah very much was, in occupying Persia. Rather, as Rawlinson wrote in his letter to Macnaghten, their attention turned to Afghanistan, specifically the political control that the Shah established in Herat in 1838.[17] With the expansion of Persian rule into Afghanistan, Rawlinson found it necessary to figure out how to undercut Persia's influence there.

This was the larger geopolitical context within which both Macnaghten and Rawlinson sought to exploit Hasan Ali Shah. Macnaghten echoed Rawlinson's wish to use him to the advantage of the British, but was torn on what exactly to do. On the one hand, he explicitly rejected the Aga Khan's offers of aid in conquest, making the point that the British had no intention of conquering Persia or even Herat.[17] On the other hand, he was not ready to let him go. Therefore, in response to the Shah's entrance into Afghanistan, Macnaghten wrote to Rawlinson on the 11th of August 1841 insisting that the Aga Khan be housed in the court of Timor, the British-appointed ruler of Qandahar.[18] He also asked Rawlinson to provide Hasan Ali Shah and his horsemen an allowance of two thousand

rupees per month; after two months, Macnaghten requested that Rawlinson raise the allowance to three thousand per month.[19]

Hasan Ali Shah joined British forces, starting in Qandahar, where he was paid to provide strategic and military support. After the British were forced to evacuate Afghanistan in 1842, he arrived in Sind to assist Charles Napier with its annexation. Thereafter, he helped the British control neighboring Baluchistan. Despite the Aga Khan's involvement in these various military operations, several British government officials were dissatisfied with his behavior. Some accused him and his followers of not taking their duties seriously enough, and others felt that he requested far too much money.[20] Meanwhile, Hasan Ali Shah's desire to return to Persia had not subsided. Although he had expressed loyalty to the British government, during his travels in Sind and even upon his arrival in India, he made several attempts to reconcile with Nasir al-Din Shah, the successor of Muhammad Shah, begging him permission to return.[21]

While colonial officials like Macnaghten erred on the side of suspicion in their dealings with Hasan Ali Shah, others, such as Rawlinson, were eager to strengthen the Aga Khan's relationship with the British. Reiterating the importance of the Aga Khan that he first asserted in 1841, in 1843 Rawlinson wrote another report to the governor general. In this letter, he explained at length the ways in which Hasan Ali Shah had provided military services in Qandahar and emphasized the need to keep the Aga Khan as an ally of the British for the following reason: "It is desirable to hold an instrument by which we may at any time throw the South of Persia into rebellion and thus paralyze any attempt at an advance from Tehran to the Eastward. . . The Aga Khan's residence in Indian territories will certainly be viewed with extreme jealousy by Persia."[22]

No other British official expressed the same level of enthusiasm for Hasan Ali Shah as Rawlinson. The Aga Khan helped Napier with his conquest of Sind by reporting intelligence matters and commanding cavalry.[23] However, in 1845, the Sind government stopped paying his allowance. At this point, he was given two options by the British government: he could either return to Persia or he could go to Calcutta, where his allowance would be continued. He chose the latter, and by 1847, he was settled in Calcutta. During this period, he continued with his campaign for military and political conquest, even though the British government was no longer interested in his assistance. He made one last formal request to the British government, this time to the governor general of Calcutta, William Cavenagh: "Should the government at present wish to avail itself of my services, and with the divine aid, I shall conquer Bulkh, Bokhara, the whole of Toorkistan and as far as Candahar and Seistan. [A]mong

my servants there are natives of Samarkand, Bokhara, and Khorasan I am anxious to be employed [19]

By this time, Rawlinson no longer influenced policy in the region, and with concerns of Persia waning, the Aga Khan had become more of an annoyance than anything else. Cavenagh did not try to stop the Aga Khan from returning to Persia, and his offers of military conquest were not taken seriously. In fact, Cavenagh was eager to do away with the Aga Khan altogether.[20]

Hasan Ali Shah's formal attachment to the British government thus came to an end. The Aga Khan remained in India, even though he was no longer a soldier, nor was he entangled with the British state's various geopolitical moves. In 1848, he moved to Bombay and launched his political career in an altogether new direction and place. The Aga Khan became almost exclusively involved with the religious politics of the Bombay public sphere, and his sole focus was to secure his position as a "God."

The Bombay Context

The Aga Khan was no doubt revered as a holy man prior to his arrival in India. As I explained above, he inherited the seat of the Isma'ili Imamate that was reconstituted with his father. However, prior to the Aga Khan Case of 1866, Ismai'lism was neither a unified religious tradition nor was the Aga Khan the official imam of the Isma'ilis. Isma'ilis were dispersed throughout Africa, India, and Iran, and over the medieval period, they developed local practices and lived in isolation without the guidance of an imam. When the Aga Khan moved to Bombay, all of this changed, as he and his sons used the mercantile and administrative resources of Bombay to convince the various groups that had some remote or distant connection to Isma'ili history that he was the true imam to whom they should devote themselves and pay tithes.

The primary community that was the target of this campaign was the Khojas. Through various chains of communication, mostly extended family members, the Aga Khan managed to convince many Khojas that he occupied a position in their community's history. He introduced new Shi'i religious practices, many of which the Khojas were not familiar with, and in 1847, as I will discuss below, he initiated a change in the Khojas' customs of inheritance.[21] He, like his father, required tributes from the community, which certain members of the Khoja community resented. These payments caused the greatest disputes between Khoja leaders and the Aga Khan. The conflicts began in 1830 and culminated in two legal

court cases: one in 1847 and another in 1866. The structure of both cases was the same—leaders of the Khoja caste versus the Aga Khan—but the outcomes were completely different. Before I turn to a discussion of the outcome of the 1847 case, let me first explain the history of the Khoja community in Bombay.

During the early nineteenth century, there were only about one hundred and fifty to two hundred Khoja families in Bombay. By 1866, however, the number had grown to about fourteen hundred.[22] Most Khojas were not native to Bombay; they had been, for the most part, petty farmers and agriculturalists in places like Sind, Gujarat, Kutch, and Kathiawad before they moved to Bombay to pursue trade opportunities. Over the course of the nineteenth century, many Khojas moved to Bombay, where they flourished economically as a community in the sphere of commerce. The life of Allarukia Soomar, the Khoja *mukhi*—community treasurer—in the 1850s, was in many ways typical of a Bombay Khoja of this period. He had moved from Sind to Bombay, where he established a successful career as a sugar trader. Similarly representative was the life of the succeeding *mukhi*, Goolam Hooseein, who lived in Bhavnagar until the age of fourteen, and then established himself as a trader and shipowner in Muscat, Zanzibar, and Bombay over the course of the mid-nineteenth century.[23] The leaders of the Khoja caste, known as *shetias*, were traders by profession and the wealthiest of the Khojas, exerting much influence over the *jamat*, the congregation of adult males that governed the community, and the *jamat khana*, the council hall in which the *jamat* met and all of the community's major social events took place.[24] Not only were the *shetias* extremely powerful among the Khojas, but they were also connected to the larger community of *shetias* in Bombay, which included Parsis, Hindu and Jain Banias, and Bohras. These merchant groups collectively controlled most of the wealth in Bombay city.[25]

The Khoja *jamat* in Bombay was established in the 1740s, and during the early nineteenth century, the *jamat* met about four times a month. All adult males were allowed to attend and vote on various issues, but it seems that the decision-making process was led by the respected *shetias* of the caste, in consultation with the *mukhi* and the *kamaria* or accountant. Both of these positions were normally filled by the wealthiest men of the community and seemed to have rotated with some level of frequency.[27] For the most part, the Khoja community was governed by the decisions of the *jamat*. The colonial government in Bombay did not intervene in Khoja affairs unless it was asked to do so. One of the *jamat*'s major tasks was to mediate disputes both within the community as well as within individual families. It would settle disputes between husbands and wives, and

jamat approval was a prerequisite of any marriage: a marriage contract would only be considered valid among Khojas if it had been approved by the *jamat*. The *jamat* did not apply any codified legal code to negotiate the various issues and would often vary its position on minor practices and customs when adjudicated a specific case. With major issues, such as inheritance or succession, however, the *jamat* did not alter the customs that the community had established as precedents.[29]

Over the course of the early to mid-nineteenth century, as the Bombay Khoja community increased its wealth, the *jamat* grew and began to exercise control over a large amount of property. The funds for the *jamat khana* itself, for the religious ceremonies and social events held there, for the Khoja burial ground, and even for cooking utensils to prepare caste dinners, were all provided by the contributions of community members. In addition to the *jamat khana*, where meeting and religious ceremonies took place, the *jamat* also controlled a mosque located in the burial ground of the property.[30]

Until the 1860s, the Khoja *jamat* in Bombay abided by both Hindu and Muslim traditions. Codes such as the inheritance of property, dress, and particular ceremonies associated with the birth of a child followed Hindu practice. Marriage ceremonies followed Muslim customs, and the Qur'an was recited in the *masjid*. There appears to have been no real conflict over the simultaneity of both Hindu and Muslim practices within the Khoja community until the Aga Khan arrived in Bombay.

Court Case of 1847

In 1847, conflict arose within the Khoja community over the issue of inheritance. Two wealthy Khoja brothers, Sajun and Hajee Meer Ally, left a large estate worth three lakhs of rupees. On one side, Bombay Khoja leaders maintained that the usual Khoja custom of inheritance ought to be followed—that the daughters of the brothers should not inherit any of the property. On the other side, there was the party of the Aga Khan, who, since 1830, had begun to exert greater authority in the affairs of the Bombay Khojas. The Aga Khan's side held the position that property distribution should follow the Qur'anic law, according to which the daughters should be guaranteed some portion of inheritance.

The dispute could not be settled among the Khojas, so it was taken to the colonial court. Sir Erskine Perry was the judge who presided over the case, and he decided to support the Khoja brothers' position that the custom of inheritance ought to remain as is. Perry came to this decision

through a discussion of whether or not the Khojas' custom of inheritance was "reasonable":

> Both these theories [Roman Law and English law] agree in this, that the custom must be considered reasonable, or rather not unreasonable, and that its reasonableness must be tested in a Court of justice. In the present instance accordingly it has been stoutly argued that this Hindu custom of disinheriting daughters, which has been adopted by these Mahomedan sectarians is most unreasonable, and that public policy would dictate the adoption of the wiser rule laid down in the Koran, by which daughters are allowed a defined share in the succession. . . But I have often disclaimed in this court any desire to decide private rights with reference to political results. 'Public policy' in the words of Mr. Justice Burroughs 'is an unruly horse, and if a Judge gets upon it he is very apt to be run away with'[30]

Perry found it necessary to introduce the contributions of Roman and English law, which dictate that the court will respect a custom if it is "reasonable." In the above passage, however, he explains that the "reasonableness" of a custom is not such a straightforward process. For example, he claims that the "Hindu custom of disinheriting daughters which has been adopted by these Mahomedan sectarians is most unreasonable." However, he decided to support this practice because "private rights" should not be interfered with, as he argues: "If a custom has been proved to exist from time whereof the memory of man runneth not to the contrary, if it is not injurious to the public interests, and if it does not conflict with any express law of the ruling power, such a custom is entitled to receive the sanction of a court of law."[31] So, while Perry considered a woman's right to inherit property "reasonable," he privileged the established custom of inheritance because he thought it more important to uphold the public interest than to overrule an unreasonable custom. Perry further substantiated his ruling in favor of custom over Qur'anic law by embracing what he saw as the diversity of practices and traditions associated with both Hinduism and Islam. In the judgment, he asserts "it was believed erroneously that the population of India might be classified under the two great heads of Mahomedan and Gentoo" and emphasizes that Muslims can be either "Shias, Sunnis, or sectarians." He further contends that it is their traditions that ought to be given primacy over any kind of assumption of the Qur'an as "positive unchangeable law."[32] This argument privileges diversity over immutable scripture, but in the same judgment, he contradicts this position, he deploys fixed notions of Islam when describing the religious behavior of Khojas, discusses the ways in which they were not "real" Muslims, and ascribes a state of ignorance to Khojas regarding their own identity.

Khojas. Two key points in Perry's judgment—that *Dasavatār* represents the "religious work of the khojas" and that Pir Sadrudin converted Khojas four hundred years ago—form the basis of the canonical interpretation of Khoja identity that is both invoked as precedent and elaborated upon in the trial and final judgment of 1866.

Disputes between the Aga Khan and Khoja Leaders

Although the case of 1847 was the first officially mediated dispute between Khoja leaders and the Aga Khan, conflicts between the two parties actually started in 1830. The first reported disagreement centered on payments the Aga Khan had been receiving from the Khoja community.[36] Although the specifics of the situation—how many Khojas were sending remittances to the Aga Khan, how much money he was receiving, and when the practice began—remain unknown, the custom was nevertheless being practiced in the first half of the nineteenth century. In addition to sending money to the Aga Khan, many Khojas were making pilgrimages to visit him. In 1828–1829, the Aga Khan sent his agent, Mirza Abdul Hussein, and his maternal grandmother, Marie Bibi, to collect contributions from the Bombay *jamat*. This money was allegedly needed to support the pilgrims who visited him in Tehran as well as his own commitment to engage "in perpetual prayer and other religious activities."

When Abdul Hussein and Marie Bibi arrived in Bombay, a group of *shetias* rebuffed the Aga Khan's demand for payment, and a series of conflicts that ultimately spanned thirty years was set in motion. Marie Bibi insisted that the *jamat* pay one hundred thousand rupees, but the *shetias* decided to pay only twenty thousand. Agents of the Aga Khan then filed a suit against the twelve main opponents, who called themselves the *barbhai*; the agents argued, "As their 'pir, or principal saint' the Khojas, it was claimed, had agreed to pay the Aga 12.5 percent of their profits."[38] The Aga Khan eventually dropped this suit, but he engineered the expulsion of the *barbhai* from the *jamat*. It was only after the Aga Khan sent yet another agent to the *barbhai*, and after a compromise of payments was reached in 1835, that the defendants were readmitted into the *jamat*.[39]

After their readmission, the *barbhai* did not stop protesting the Aga Khan's involvement in the Khoja community. Habib Ibrahim and Dathubhai Sumar, the leading campaigners, disapproved of the Aga Khan's insistence on controlling the *jamat*. This resistance was fueled by the Aga Khan's financial demands, but also by a competing vision for the *jamat*'s

role within the Khoja community. The *shetias* were products of the cultural milieu that brought nineteenth-century ideas of reform and progress into the *jamat*—a trend that troubled the Aga Khan. The *shetias* participated in the growing educational circles that emerged from Elphinstone, the first English school in Bombay, in the mid-nineteenth century. By the 1840s, Bombay had become a leading center of higher education, primarily because of the establishment of Elphinstone, which trained an elite group of Indians, particularly the wealthier class, in the English language, and in the arts, sciences, and literature of Europe. Although the merchant communities were neither directly attached to Elphinstone nor the immediate recipients of the mission to educate an elite, the instruction's values of reform and progress permeated the attitudes of Bombay merchant communities.[42] For example, Parsis and Hindu Banias started printing presses and grew involved in the reform mission. The Khojas also started their own press, embraced forms of Western education, and adopted many popular mid-nineteenth-century ideas of reform. By the 1850s the Khoja community leaders had started their own English-language school in Bombay and established a newspaper, the *Khoja Dost*. Just as the various merchant communities operated in business alliances with one another, when it came to issues of reform within their respective communities, each group was supportive of the others' endeavors. During the time of the famous Maharaja Libel Case, for example, Khoja reformers wrote sympathetically in support of Karsondas Mulji's promotion of Western education and criticisms of the religious leaders of the Pushtimarga Vaishnava community.[43]

The press became the primary channel through which the Khoja reformers voiced their opposition to the changes the Aga Khan was trying to impose on the Khoja community. By the time the Aga Khan arrived in Bombay in 1848, the newspapers were inundated with responses to his arrival. In a collection of newspaper articles titled *A Voice from India* and dated 1824–1869, an anonymous editor describing himself as a native of Bombay and resident in London, compiled a series of newspaper articles, written between 1814 and 1869, from the *Bombay Times and Standard* and the *Times of India*, all of which critique the Aga Khan. The introduction to the volume describes the Aga Khan as the following:

> Hussain Hussanee, of Bombay, who is commonly called and known there by the appellation of Aga Khan—styling himself the "grandson of the prophet Mahomet," —as a Persian refugee and dares not enter the Shah's dominions, being what is termed in England an "outlaw" and as to his assumed relationship to Mahomet it is altogether untrue, being only asserted by him

for the purpose of creating and establishing in the minds of the people an importance to which he is in no way entitled. This is, therefore, as great an imposture upon the credulity of the uneducated class, especially, as can well be conceived, and is only equally by his assumed sanctity, acting as Pope, in imparting blessings and issuing excommunications; and yet, so utterly disgusting is the depravity of this pretender, that his hypocrisy becomes manifest to all observers of his vile practices: in fact, it would do violence to the propriety of language to depict him in all his deformity.[43]

The editor's analyses of the Aga Khan reflect the opinions of the reformers who responded to the growing power of the Aga Khan's authority over the Bombay *jamat*. The editor explains that the reason he collated the articles was in order to "speedily put an end to" the Aga Khan's "tyrannous power" and "his domination."[44] All of the articles in the collection focus on criticisms of the Aga Khan that were established in the editor's introduction, that he is an "outlaw" Persian exiled from his homeland, that he has preyed upon the "uneducated class" of the Khoja community by convincing them of his divine status and authority, and that he had mistreated leaders of the reform party by "issuing excommunications."

As demonstrated by the volume's introduction and the articles it contains, the reformers' position is inflected with a kind of "rationalism" that informs both their analytic style as well as content of their qualms about the Aga Khan's role within the community. The first article of the collection, written for the *Bombay Times and Standard* on May 4, 1861, repeats the description of the Khoja community from the volume's opening: "There are a few wealthy and highly intelligent men among them, who are well known to us, but the caste generally is sunk in the deepest ignorance and fanaticism."[44] The author then explains that although the Aga Khan is revered by many Khojas, his presence amongst the Khojas in Bombay is "a mere accident and coincidence." He outlines the circumstances that brought the Aga Khan to India, providing a history of the events in Persia that had led to his outlaw status and his involvement with the British in Qandahar and Sind.[47] The article closes with the request that the British government remove the Aga Khan under the State Prisoner's Act of 1859.[48]

One of the main topics of discussion in the collection is the alliance established between the Aga Khan and the British in Qandahar, Baluchistan, and Sind. The articles in *A Voice from India* attempt to demonstrate that the "coincidence" of the Aga Khan's entrance into the Bombay *jamat* was in fact a result of the military and political ties he forged with the colonial government, rather than any natural spiritual ties of allegiance to

the Khoja community. The details of the Aga Khan's "accidental" arrival provide one justification for expelling the Aga Khan. The other reason, the author explains, is the amount of turmoil he has caused within the Khoja community. He argues that the Aga Khan ought to resume "wandering" because of the trouble he has created:

We fear that the public interest makes it imperative for him to resume his wanderings, and for this Aga Khan has himself only to thank. From the date of his arrival in Bombay, the Khojah community has been torn in pieces by the [illegible] by his pretensions. As the descendent of the peer of saint who had [illegible] their forefathers to Mohammedism, Aga Khan [illegible] regarded as their leader, and even were the [illegible] followers that divine honors should be paid to him [illegible] the Supreme being. The caste had hitherto [illegible] but the blasphemous nature of [illegible] of the more intelligent of them, which [illegible] appropriate for his own use all the [illegible] speak truly, his attempting the same thing with the [illegible] two divisions, the enlightened few rejecting the Aga as an imposter, the deluded many accepting him as their God.[49]

The Khoja reformers distinguished themselves from their fellow caste men through their commitment to rational and "modern" pursuits, over and against paying reverence and dues to the Aga Khan. Most of the articles in the volume claim that the Aga Khan had divided the Khojas into two camps: "the deluded many accepting him as their God" and "the enlightened few." The collection also criticizes the Aga Khan's position on education. The articles in *A Voice from India* repeatedly make reference to the ways in which the Khoja reformers worked to promote education and "uplift" the Khoja community, while arguing that the Aga Khan consciously prevented Khojas from learning English and actually opposed educational efforts. For example, one article published in 1861 asks: "Does he encourage educational pursuits? Does he try to inculcate in the minds of the worshippers a spirit of reformation—freedom—liberty? No. Just the reverse. He opposes all attempts to diffuse knowledge; he repudiates every effort to instruct the people in the English language, although he took care to have his sons taught therein."[50]

Another topic of discussion in the collection is a tragic episode that took place in 1850. By 1848, the Aga Khan had taken up residence in the Bombay *jamat khana* and rallied the support of the majority of the Bombay Khojas. To protest the Aga Khan's rising popularity and residence in the *jamat*, the *barbhai* (now consisting of a slightly different group of

men) had seceded from the *jamat* and established their own *jamat khana* on the outskirts of Bombay. In 1850, four members of this seceded *jamat* were murdered in the new *jamat khana* they had built. All the articles in *A Voice form India* agree that these murders were provoked by the Aga Khan. In the introduction, the editor writes:

> It was he who gave a sword (with this blessing and promise of heaven) to each of the four assassins for the purpose of committing murder, the perpetration of which was effected by them upon unoffending persons while at their devotions. True, these murderers were brought to justice and were hanged; but this wretch, Aga Khan, the instigator, escaped, as none dared then to give evidence at the trial against him whom in their superstitious infatuation they believe to be a personification of God. And moreover, he is by the British residents styled "Prince" and "His Highness." Thus, as great a tyrant as was ever tolerated in the British dominion, is a pensioner receiving a large sum annually from England.[51]

Other writers in the collection describe the incident as the "massacre of 1850" and directly blame the Aga Khan and his party. The same article that describes the "coincidental" arrival of the Aga Khan and his power over the majority of the Khojas provides the following account of the episode:

> The feud became bitter, and ended in the massacre of the leaders who opposed the Aga's pretensions, at the covert instigation, it is generally believed, of the old man himself. The dreadful scene was enacted at Mahim on the last day of the Moharrum, the 13th November, 1850. The Jumat Khana, or caste meeting-house at Mahim, is divided into two compartments, one of which had hitherto been used by the followers of the Aga Khan, and the upper by those of this sect who are opposed to his spiritual supremacy; but the former, who are the predominant party, wanted to insist upon the ejectment of the latter from that part of the building, and failing to do so by fair means, resorted to violence. On the last day of the Mohammedan festival of the Moharrum some nineteen or twenty men of the Aga Khan's party rushed into the upper room of the Jumat Khana, where their victims and others, with a number of young children around them, were sitting conversing together, and some five or six of them made an onslaught on the company present and put four men of the party to the sword. Three of them were killed on the spot—having been hacked to pieces by the swords of their assailants—and the fourth man died in hospital ten days afterwards from his wounds. Two or three others were wounded, one rather severely.[52]

This author also claims that after this incident in the *jamat khana*, the Aga Khan's party threatened further violence. He notes that one Khoja reformer in particular had received a threatening letter. Addressed to "Khojah Dhumma Poonja," and signed "your bloodthirsty friend," it

warns of an imminent attack upon Dhumma Poonja and his family. The letter reads: "Please learn that you and your two sons should make and keep ready your and their respective wills and testaments because (you know) how Cassum Esmal and Noor Mahomed Amersey and his accomplices went away, that is, how they were murdered."[53] The author of the article writes that "[w]e believe this old man, Aga Khan, to be plotting the murder of Mr. Dhurumsey Poonjabhoy and his friends at this moment, and we denounce him as covertly instigating the crime by the inflammatory harangues he is addressing to his followers in the assemblies of the Jumat Khana, Mazagon."[54] The author implores the government to invoke the State Prisoner's Act of 1859 and deport the Aga Khan from Bombay, because, he insists, that the influence of the Aga Khan is growing amongst "a dense population of ignorant and fanatical Mohammedans."[55]

The murders of *barbhar* are the subject of much discussion in *A Voice from India*, even more so than the details of the "accidental and coincidental" arrival of the Aga Khan, since the writers in the collection were convinced that the murderers of the *barbhar* had been masterminded by either the followers of the Aga Khan or the Aga Khan himself. Although the murderers were captured and eventually punished for their crimes, a group of Khoja reformers appealed to the Bombay High Court and filed a suit in 1851. Justice Perry produced a document, known as the Declaration of Rights, which proclaimed that the *jamat* was the official property of the Khoja community, and that the Aga Khan had no right to interfere with matters therein.[56]

Conclusion

The events that transpired between 1830 and 1866 divided the Bombay Khoja community into two main groups. On one side, there were the Khoja *shetias*, who represented the social and economic leadership of the *jamat*. In the early to mid-nineteenth century, the Khoja leaders controlled the internal affairs of the *jamat* and also adapted to their new urban environment. They established a Sunni mosque adjacent to the *jamat khana*, thereby assimilating themselves into the religious context of Bombay. Referred to as reformers, they assumed a particular vision for the Khoja community that was shaped by the terms of Western modernity, as they were committed to ideals of social reform, education, and progress. When their authority came into conflict with the Aga Khan's, in the official disputes of 1847 and 1851, their primary response was to call for self-governance and control over their own community affairs. At the

time, the state supported their position: Justice Perry sided with the Khoja leaders over the Aga Khan in 1847, and in 1851, Perry ruled that the Aga Khan was forbidden from interfering in Khoja affairs.

The group that opposed the reformist Khoja leaders was twofold: the Aga Khan (along with his immediate cohort, including his family, who managed his affairs) and his supporters among the Khoja community. The Aga Khan was a Persian exile employed by the British, but prior to his work for the British government, he had been an object of devotion for many Khojas, as documented by the traditions of payments to him and pilgrimages in his name. The conflict between the two sides started over payments that the Aga Khan demanded from the Khojas. The next chapter will illustrate how Khoja leaders chose to create a sectarian divide between themselves and the Aga Khan, claiming that the Khojas were Sunni and that the Aga Khan was a Shi'a. With the Khoja majority supporting the Aga Khan, however, the new terms of conflict undermined the Khoja leaders' case, the majority of the Khojas simply began identifying as Shi'i. Furthermore, while the 1866 case introduced this sectarian rift, it also marked a transformation of the role of *Dasavatār* played within the Khoja community. In 1847, *Dasavatār* had been introduced as part of the discussion of Khoja identity, along with the point that Pir Sadrudin converted the Khojas four hundred years ago. Justice Perry claimed that *Dasavatār* was a synthesis of Hinduism and Islam, and therefore unidentifiable along sectarian lines. The following analysis of the 1866 trial will illustrate how the defense appropriated the text to demonstrate that Khojas were specifically Shi'i Isma'ili. With this skillful manipulation of *Dasavatār* and with the support of the majority, the defense's case proved more convincing than the plaintiffs'. The Aga Khan's victory in this case, in turn, officially established the religious identity of the Khojas as Shi'i Isma'ili.

CHAPTER TWO

Sectarian Showdown in the Aga Khan Case of 1866

> The Court is now in a position to give an adequate description of the Khoja sect: it is a sect of people whose ancestors were Hindus in origin, which was converted to and has throughout abided in the faith of the Shia imami Isma'ilis, and which has always been and still is bound by ties of spiritual allegiance to the hereditary Imams of the Isma'ilis.
>
> *Judgment for the Advocate General vs. Muhammad Husen Husen, authorised, called Aga Khan, 1866*

TWENTY THREE YEARS after Charles Napier referred to the Aga Khan as "God" in his letter to Ellenborough, the Aga Khan's divine status became the subject of a legal battle. The Aga Khan Case of 1866 culminated with a ruling by Justice Arnould, a judge in the Bombay High Court, in which he decided that the Aga Khan was the imam of the Isma'ili sect. Napier's statement that the Aga Khan was a "God" was an exaggeration, but in nineteenth-century Bombay, many Khojas considered him divine. At the same time, however, other Khojas vehemently opposed this position. The leaders of the Khoja caste were the most vocal opponents of the Aga Khan, and as they had before, took legal action to express their grievances. Unlike the resolution of the 1847 case, however, the decision in the Aga Khan Case of 1866 ultimately favored the Aga Khan.

The context of 1866 case was altogether different from that of 1847. Unlike the 1847 case, which was prompted by a specific inheritance dispute, the plaintiffs brought a general case against the Aga Khan in 1866 after years of continuing disagreements between the two sides. The plaintiffs in 1866, the Khoja leaders, argued that the property of the Khojas belonged only to members of the Khoja caste, and since the Aga Khan was not a Khoja, he had no right to share in Khoja property or to have a say in its management. The plaintiffs had been campaigning against the growing involvement of the Aga Khan in Khoja affairs since 1830, and so 1866 marked the culmination of more than thirty years of conflict between the

two groups. This extended conflict revolved around issues of payment and property rights, but throughout, questions of religious identity framed the debate. In order to resolve the payment and property disputes, Justice Arnould felt it necessary to come to the above conclusion and defined the Khojas as "Shi'a Imami Isma'ilis."

The plaintiffs formulated their case against the Aga Khan, whom they were trying to dislodge completely from the Khoja community, in terms of religious differences, arguing that the Khojas were Sunni Muslims, while the Aga Khan was a Shi'a. Justice Arnould agreed that religious differences were crucial to resolving the case, so the question of religious identity became the primary focus of the trial. The defense, however, was able to make the issue favor their argument, providing a convincing case that the majority of the Khojas shared a religious identity with the Aga Khan. The court concurred and declared that the Aga Khan and the Khojas were both "Shi'a Imami Isma'ili."

The Aga Case of 1866 transpired in the aftermath of the Rebellion of 1857, a time when British legal policies in India were being overhauled. Between 1858 and 1869, the British government undertook a complete codification of the legal system of Bengal, Madras, and Bombay presidencies. Undoubtedly a response to the 1857 rebellion, the three presidencies lost all political autonomy and were unified under a single judicial code. After losing autonomous rights, colonial subjects of Bombay Presidency (as well as Madras Presidency) were subject to Bengal's legal system, in which caste and religious groups were not allowed to govern themselves under customary law, as they had been before 1857.

The period following the Rebellion also marked a phase in which practices of colonial knowledge production took shape. As part of a larger concern with why the Rebellion took place, the colonial state initiated detailed studies of Indian society. These accounts, which relied upon earlier Orientalist and Christian missionary ideas of caste and religion, ultimately culminated with the first Indian census in 1871.[2] Although the Aga Khan Case of 1866 occurred just before the first census, Justice Arnould's discussion in the final judgment reveals an identical emphasis on anthropological classification and knowledge production. In his judgment, religion was the most important category of classification. Colonial notions of religion were, like colonial conceptions of caste, drawn from Orientalist perspectives and Christian paradigms. Justice Arnould defined the Khojas as "Isma'ili" through Christian ideas of church and sect, and an Orientalist perspective of Islam—neither of which, I argue, captured the specific character of Khojas' religious practices and beliefs.

When comparing the judgments of 1847 and 1866, it is apparent that in the judgment of 1847, questions of religion and identity were ancillary to

the discussion of the inheritance custom in practice. As recounted in the previous chapter, Perry was primarily focused, first, on determining the "reasonableness" of the custom, and then, on whether he should overrule the custom because of its lack of reasonableness. In 1866, however, Justice Arnould's entire judgment was centered on the question of the Khojas' original religion.[3]

After introducing the background of the case and the particular details of the bill filed by the plaintiffs, Justice Arnould began his analysis of the case by writing, "The fifth clause of the plaintiffs' bill [prayers] is the most important. It, in effect, raises that question with which the evidence in this suit has been principally concerned, as to what, in their origin, were the religious tenets of the khoja community, and what from the beginning has been the nature of their relations spiritual and temporal, with the ancestors of the first defendant, Aga Khan, who, in his part al leges that he is, and that his ancestors in a long line of hereditary imams have successively been the Imams or spiritual heads of the Shia Imami Isma'ilis."[4] The "fifth clause" Arnould refers reads as follows: "That it [property] may be declared that the said trust premises are holden and ought to be applied to and for the original charitable, religious, and public uses and trusts to or for which the same were dedicating and intended so to be, and to none other, and to and for the sole benefit of the khoja sect and none other; and that no person not being a member or having ceased to be a member of the same, and in particular no person professing Shia opinions in matters of religious and religious discipline, is entitled unto, or ought to have, any share or interest therein, or any voice in the management thereof."[5]

This clause explains that the Khojas filed a suit to clarify the ownership of Khoja community property. The plaintiffs' bill also requested an official inventory of all the Khoja property that had come under the control of the Aga Khan's party, and that all such property be returned to the rightful and original owners of the property, the Khoja community.[6] The plaintiffs, therefore, filed the suit because the Aga Khan's party had taken control over the Bombay Khoja property, and they wanted to reclaim the property for themselves. In the bill itself, resolving questions of religion and identity was not the primary intent of the plaintiffs' case, yet ideas about religious difference were central to their argument. The plaintiffs invoked the phrase "khoja sect" to distinguish the Bombay Khoja community from the defendants in the suit, who were referred to not by name but rather as those "professing Shia opinions." This point, that Khojas were a separate group from the Aga Khan and his party, served as the basis for the plaintiffs' entire case. In order to justify their contention that the Aga Khan should not be involved in Khoja community affairs, the plaintiffs attempted to delineate religious differences between themselves

and the Aga Khan. Thus, a new question and new terminology—were the Khojas Sunnis or Shi'a?—entered the debate as a strategic move on the part of the plaintiffs. They argued that the Khojas were and had always been Sunni in order to provide grounds to exclude the Aga Khan—according to their argument, a Shi'a—from the caste affairs of the Khojas.

The Plaintiffs

The plaintiffs' primary goal, according to the bill of complaint, was to expel the Aga Khan from Khoja affairs and return the property he had appropriated to the Khoja community. In order to achieve this goal, however, they needed to show that the Aga Khan had managed to earn the support of many within the community, and thus they were forced to acknowledge the Aga Khan's divine status among certain Khojas. The plaintiffs, therefore, began their case by attempting to prove that the Aga Khan's divine status lacked any historical basis and thus hoped to undercut his authority. Addressing this issue, the plaintiffs' lawyers argued that Khojas regarded the Aga Khan as "one of the class of Mussulmans described as Syuds, and who were treated with respect by Mussulmans as being descended in a direct line from their great prophet." By agreeing that the Aga Khan was a "Syud"—a respected person descended from the family of the prophet—the plaintiffs' case granted some level of religious authority to the Aga Khan.[7]

In response to these statements, the judge asked the plaintiffs for clarification, asking whether the plaintiffs agreed that Aga Khan had no right to be considered a pir or saint. In response to this question, one of the plaintiffs' lawyers, Mr. Scoble, replied that his clients agreed that the Aga Khan had no right to be considered a saint or pir. Scoble used this discussion to make a different kind of point, namely that pirs and saints were not considered legitimate forms of authority according to the Qur'an. He explained, "Although there were pirs recognized by Mahomedans throughout Asia, the office was not right in the Koran."[8] Additionally, he explained that titles such as pir and saint were "added by ambitious persons for their own purposes."[9] This point about the Qur'anic position on intercessory figures was the first reason the plaintiffs were not willing acknowledge any kind of status as "pir" or "saint," but it wasn't explicated to the same extent as the second reason—what the plaintiffs explained as the self-designated titles the Aga Khan assumed for the purpose of exercising power over the Khojas. Mr. Scoble, and the other plaintiffs' lawyer, Mr. Anstey, pointed out inconsistencies with the titles that the Aga Khan

had used over the course of the thirty years of conflict between the two parties. In 1829, Anstey noted, when the Aga Khan had filed suit against certain Khojas who did not pay a requested percentage of their income to him, the Aga Khan had described himself as a "religious person of the Mahomedan sect called Khojas now resident at Teheran and a re[illegible] of His Majesty the King of Persia."[10] In 1830, however, when a different conflict about payments to the Aga Khan arose, he gave himself a new title, calling himself pir of the Khojas. And when the Aga Khan came to Bombay in 1845, Anstey continued, he had declared himself as *sirkar*, a reverential term meaning "lord" or "master" of the Khoja community. To demonstrate this variation of the Aga Khan's choice of titles, Anstey read aloud in the courtroom a letter written by the Aga Khan in 1846. The letter stated the following: "Everyone who has a sincere feeling for me, according to his ability, will give to the 'mookhie,' i.e. the superintendent of the affairs of the khoja community, Dost Mahomed (and to the Kamaria, the mukhi's assistant) Peerbhoy, the offerings [illegible] to the sirkar (me). This business between a spiritual guide and his disciples is not compulsory or imperative. I do not require anything from any person by compulsion, but only from love and good will."[11]

The plaintiffs introduced this letter as evidence not only the Aga Khan's conflicting statements, but also the exorbitance of the demands he began making upon his 1846 arrival in India. This letter, the plaintiffs argued, also contradicted the Aga Khan's later statements including, for example, a letter he wrote in 1850 which stated the following: "A large number of khojas—inhabiting parts of Persia and Arabia, and also Zanzibar, Muscat, Kurrachee, Sind, Cutch, Hallad, Kathiawar, Bhownuggur, Goga, Surat, [illegible] and the districts and Villages of those several places, and that all the khojas in the last mentioned place—treated and do treat me, as they did my ancestors before me, as the pir and head of the sect of Ismailis, and that it was, and is believed that the sect converted by pir Sadurdin, a shia, a disciple or emissary of one of my ancestors who was their spiritual and temporal head of the sect of Muhammadans called Ismailis."[12]

The plaintiffs cited these documents in an attempt to illustrate discrepancies in the various titles the Aga Khan claimed, but these letters also suggested that the Aga Khan had successfully integrated himself into the community and was able to exercise authority in a variety of ways. The 1846 letter, for example, demonstrates his influence over the *jamat*, where he was able to place his own men in the positions of treasurer *(mukhi,* and accountant *(kamaria), jamat* offices that traditionally belonged to Khoja leaders. The fact that the Aga Khan mandated that payments be directed to him through these officials provided further evidence of his

influence within the community. Moreover, the letter indicates that the Aga Khan assumed the title *sirkar*, which shows that he asserted (or at least attempted to assert) his power both as an object of devotion and as the rightful recipient of the community's tribute payments.

The letter of 1850 demonstrates that the Aga Khan's authority was recognized not only in Bombay but also among Khojas throughout India, and even outside the subcontinent. This second letter set forth, for the first time, the specifics of the historical connection to the Khojas that he claims. Whereas in 1846 he assumed the title of *sirkar*, a general divine status, here he maintained that he was a descendant of the Isma'ili imam who dispatched Sadrudin to India to convert the Khojas. The Aga Khan articulated a precise relationship between Isma'ili and Khoja history and situated himself as a descendant of the "spiritual and temporal head" of Isma'ilis.

In this history, Pir Sadrudin served as the key connecting figure between the Aga Khan and the Khojas. Sadrudin had appeared in the Khoja narrative before; in 1847, Perry made reference to the fact that Pir Sadrudin had converted the Khojas some four hundred years prior. It is also likely that Pir Sadrudin figured in Khoja popular consciousness because Sadrudin was considered one of the three authoritative authors of *Dasavatār*.[14] The Aga Khan's authority was likely legitimized through the connection to Sadrudin, who occupied a place of respect in Khoja devotional practices and whose historical significance was officially proclaimed in Perry's judgment of 1847.

Most of the plaintiffs' case focused on detailing the history of the Aga Khan's various titles and trying to prove that the Aga Khan simply adopted them over time without any legitimacy. For the rest of their argument, however, they attempted to show that the beliefs of the Aga Khan's religious affiliation, Shi'i Islam, and specifically Shi'a Isma'ili Islam were inherently corrupt. Anstey was committed to proving that the doctrines of the Shi'as and Isma'ilis were morally reprehensible, and even insisted that the defendants were not entitled to call themselves Muslims.[15] Using descriptions of the Isma'ilis given by Orientalist writers such Silvestre De Sacy, Anstey hoped to indicate that, by virtue of their religion, the Aga Khan and his followers ought to be regarded as untrustworthy. He described the practices of Isma'ilis in great detail, explaining that the goal of the practitioners was to achieve a hypnotic state of complete obedience in which the convert was no longer a man but an "automaton" who could be compelled to commit murder or suicide in the name of the religion.[16] Furthermore, Anstey explained to the court that all "initiates" of the Isma'ili religion were instructed to maintain a false front, appearing

to practice the "Mahomedan" faith while in fact honoring their duties to the imam.[17]

Describing the Isma'ilis as predatory, subversive, and cult-like, Anstey hoped to undermine the religion's legitimacy, as a means to undermine the Aga Khan's. Introducing stories about Isma'ili assassins was also an important piece to the plaintiffs' case because they wanted to show that the Aga Khan was a biological descendant of the "Old Man of the Mountains, Chief of the Assassins."[18] Anstey's attempt to connect the Aga Khan and his followers to the discourse of assassin legends was not altogether new, as the Khoja reformers had tried to elaborate this relationship in their writings. The reformers, however, had focused specifically on the murders of 1840, for which they held the Aga Khan and his party responsible.[19] Anstey made larger claims that the Isma'ili tradition was an intrinsically heretical breeding ground for subversive behavior. In doing so, he joined a long-running tradition of disparaging the Isma'ilis as "assassins," which began with Abbasid and Seljuk polemics against them and continued in the writings of Orientalists such as Silvestre de Sacy.

As evidence to delegitimize the Aga Khan and the Shi'i religion, the plaintiffs brought two sets of documents to the court: the Qur'an and a body of writings on Persian history and Islam. As stated earlier, the plaintiffs introduced the Qur'an to debunk the Aga Khan's claims to the title of pir. In Anstey's discussion of the heretical nature of Shi'as and Isma'ilis, he again turned to the Qur'an. He claimed that within the first four chapters the issue of "such smatics" was addressed, and that the formation of sects was explicitly forbidden. According to this reading, he claimed, "with regard to schismatics, being as Ismaili, he (Aga Khan) would be destroyed and all his rights denied."[20]

Anstey then turned to accounts of Persian history and Shi'i Islam, in order to show that the Aga Khan's religious affiliation was not related to the Khojas. He began by describing Persian history during the time of "Nashirwan the just." In this period, he explained, there were two influential schools of religious thought, the Zoroastrians and the "Muzdakes," both of whom "kept free thinking doctrines hidden" in the form of secret societies, although the latter "held communistic opinions like the Ismailis."[21] In his overview of Persian religions, Anstey neither delineated the distinct historical periods nor addressed the differences among the various religious groups he brought to the discussion. Comparing Isma'ilis to Zoroastrians and Mazdakites, for example, assumes Islamic practices and pre-Islamic Persian traditions can be discussed interchangeably. The judge seemed to be perplexed by the direction of Anstey's argument. He even asked Anstey if he was going at great lengths to describe the history

of Isma'ilism in order to prove that "the faith of the Ismailis was not a 'Mahomedan' faith, and that the religion of the Ismailis was that held by the Aga Khan," and Anstey agreed.

Anstey continued to introduce various texts without explaining them or describing the historical context in which they were produced. He did so with the purpose of connecting the Aga Khan's lineage to the Persian religion tradition, which he characterized as morally corrupt. Anstey quoted from a group of sources to demonstrate that Isma'il, an ancestor of the Aga Khan, was a Persian. The *Times of India* gives the following account: "Ismail was a Persian by birth and religion. Mr Anstey then quoted from the sixth discourse upon the Persians, by Sir William Jones, pages 110 and 128. He then went on to say that at the time the discourse was written, the Dabistan had not been translated. Mr. Anstey proceeded to comment on the Dasatir, and from p. 59 of the translation of the Dabistan quoted as follows: 'They reckon it meritorious to recite the prayers and texts of the Shat Dasatir relative to the unity of the self-existent creator . . .'[23] Shortly after, the article reports: 'After remarking on the ten incarnations and other doctrinal matter, Mr. Anstey, in answer to the learned judge, said the shias believed in 12 imams, the ismailies separated and order off at the 6th imam of whom they suppose the Aga Khan to be a descendent.'"[24]

Anstey provided no introduction, let alone historical background on any of the sources mentioned, and yet they formed the basis upon which he offered a history of Shi'i religion. In the first quotation alone, Anstey cited what appears to be four distinct sources—"sixth discourse upon the Persians" by William Jones, "Dabistan,"[25] "Dasatir,"[26] and "Shat Dasatir"—in order to make a point about the practices of the Isma'ilis. In the second passage, which was supposed to be continuation of the discussion, Anstey commented on "the ten incarnations and other matters" before describing the various differences between the two main Shi'i divisions in the history of Islam. Even if the reporter misinterpreted some of Anstey's speech, it is nonetheless evident that Anstey elided pre-Islamic traditions with the Isma'ili tradition and made reference to *Dasavatār*, the poem about "ten incarnations," in the context of Persian religions.

That *Dasavatār* even entered into a discussion of Persian religions is one of the strangest aspects of the case. Not only does *Dasavatār* share no connection to any of the texts cited, but also, at several points of the trial, various participants called *Dasavatār* "Dasatir"—the name of a seventeenth-century Zoroastrian text about famous Persian prophets.[27] The newspaper reports, for example, that Anstey quoted from various passages of the "Desatir," in order to show that "it was held in high estimation by

the Ismailis." The judge also asked Anstey if the Khojas customarily read *Dasatir* after death in the community, and Anstey replied, "Yes, but it is shown that the Aga Khan could not be accounted a Mahomedan were he to use that book."[28]

This conversation originated for a similar reason as the first discussion about *Dasatir*, in which Anstey attempted to describe the Persian texts associated with Aga Khan's lineage. However, in this particular conversation between the judge and Anstey, a telling exchange took place. Anstey brought up "Desatir" again as a Persian text in order to support his contention that the Aga Khan was a heretic. "No Muslim would read a Persian devotional text, but since the Aga Khan does make use of the 'Desatir,' he must not be a true Muslim." The judge attempted to understand the relation between "Desatir" and the Khojas, "it seems, to see if there was a connection between Anstey's discussion of Persian religions and Khoja practices. The judge's question about the practice of reading "Dasatir" after a death, however, steered the discussion to the subject of *Dasavatār*, not *Dasatir*. *Dasavatar* was the text read by Khojas as part of death rituals. Anstey told the judge that both the Khojas and the Aga Khan use *Dasatir*. In conceding this point, however, Anstey confused *Dasatir* with *Dasavatār*, the text read by Khojas upon death. By mistakenly agreeing with the judge, Anstey undermined his own argument. Anstey had introduced *Dasatir* in the first place to differentiate the texts and practices of the Khojas from those of the Aga Khan, but by conflating two totally unrelated texts, he ended up lending credence to the idea that the Khojas and the Aga Khan shared common devotional practices.

The plaintiffs' case centered on the contentions that the Aga Khan had unjustly asserted authority over the Khojas and that Isma'ili Islam was inherently heretical. These arguments relied on the assumption that the Khojas were and always had been Sunni. At one point, Anstey addressed the Aga Khan and said that, "if you are what you represent you are, you are neither the temporal nor the spiritual head of the khojas because the khojas followed not nor believed in the practices of the Aga Khan religion. . . . Because the khojas follow none of those practices, but follow Soonni practices and the Soonni disciplines."[29] In order to prove the ties between the Khoja community and Sunni Islam, Anstey called witnesses who testified that the practices of the Khojas were Sunni and that the Aga Khan's party had been a recent and unwelcome imposition upon the *jamat*. Anstey asked the witness Goolam Rasul—who had served as imam of the Khoja mosque in Bombay for more than twenty years—if Shi'ism was heretical, and if "the tenets of the Ismailies were opposed to the Mahomedan religion." Rasul agreed that it was, and also remarked

that the Aga Khan's party's involvement in the Khoja *jamat* was only a recent phenomenon. He told the court that during his time as a *mukhi* of the Bombay mosque, all the defendants in the case had identified as Sunnis: "I know the defendants in this case. None of them professed himself a Shia up till the time I have mentioned (1851). . . . I was in the habit of attending their houses for devotional purposes and read prayers on the occasions of sickness and death. The prayers I used were always Sunni."[30]

Rasul also described in great detail how the Aga Khan's group had slowly appropriated all Khoja property. In one example, he explained how one day in 1864, after he was no longer imam at the mosque, he was surprised to hear the Shi'i call to prayer from the mosque, so he entered the mosque to investigate. He found that Aga Khan's party had taken possession of it and forced Rasul's successor, Abdool Razzack, out.

To provide further evidence of the Aga Khan's infringement upon the Bombay *jamat* and appropriation of Khoja property, Anstey called another witness, Rahimbhoy Hemraj. Hemraj provided an account of the community's schools in great detail, specifically how the Khoja leaders had worked hard to educate their youth. He gave the example of two schools that had been built by a prominent Khoja named Cassimbhoy Nathabhoy but were nevertheless considered part of the property governed by the *jamat khana*. Hemraj explained that there were approximately seventy-five children attending the school who were being taught Sunni doctrines. The school had been in operation for over twenty-five years, but, like the mosque, had recently been taken over by the Aga Khan.

While Goolam Rasul and Rahimbhoy Hemraj were called to testify about the ways in which the Aga Khan's party had begun to forcibly seize *jamat* property and to impose Shi'a practices upon the Sunni community, both witnesses were also forced to engage with the text *Dasavatár*. Take, for example, the following conversation between Anstey and Goolam Rasul:

[Anstey]: Now, according to Sunni doctrine, is it lawful to hold that God has been or can become incarnate in a creature [?]
[Rasul]: No.
[A]: That is what the Koran calls associating to God in worship?
[R]: Yes.
[A]: Then, is it lawful or unlawful to hold that Ali is the incarnation of God
[R]: It is entirely illegal.
[A]: What do Shias hold upon these points?
[R]: The Shias look upon Ali as God.
[A]: Is that as the Imam [?]
[R]: Yes, and they also look upon God as the Imam.
[A]: Do you know the sect of Shias called Ismailis?

[R]: Yes.
[A]: Is it contrary to the Koran and contrary to Sunni books to hold that Vishnu the Hindoo God became incarnate in Ali?
[R]: It is against the Koran.

Dasavatár[31] is not explicitly mentioned, but Anstey's questions directly refer to central ideas of the poem—such as God incarnating as a human, and specifically, that "Vishnu the Hindu God became incarnate as Ali." Anstey asked Goolam Rasul to give a reading of the text, in order to have a religious expert validate his own assertion that the tenets of *Dasavatár* were heretical according to the Qur'an and Sunni Islam. The defense, however, followed with a line of questioning about the text that managed to turn the argument in their favor. In the cross-examination of Rahimbhoy Hemraj, the defense attorney, Mr. Howard, asked the witness to describe "Desatir." The newspaper report explains that the witness described the book as narrating ten incarnations: "the fish Incarnation, the Tortoise Incarnation, the Boar Incarnation, the Lion Incarnation, the Dwarf Incarnation, the Parsham Incarnation, the Buddha Incarnation, and the Nak Kalikí or Tenth Incarnation."[32] Hemraj's interpretation of the text as Hindu supported the plaintiffs' case by implying that such a text would have little significance for Khojas. The defense argued that the poem was, in fact, only partially Hindu, and that it was simultaneously a Hindu and Muslim text. As one of the defense witnesses, the Aga Khan's secretary Kureem Khan explained, "The *Desatir* was a book made for the conversion of the *khojas* by pir Sadrodeen, the *khojas* having originally been Hindus. . . . The tenth avatar is that of Ali."[33]

The Defense

Kureem Khan's explanation of *Dasavatár* proved crucial in the defense's victory, but the defense also had to challenge several other points in the plaintiffs' case. In response to the plaintiffs' claims that Shi'as could not be considered Muslim, the defense began their case by quoting extensively from texts, arguing that it was impossible to doubt that Shi'as were Muslims. To refute the historical narrative of Shi'i Islam that Anstey had presented in his case, the first defense lawyer, Mr. Howard, explained to the court that Shi'ism was a specific division within Islam. He drew analogies between sectarianism in Islam and schisms in Christianity, suggesting that the division between Sunnis and Shi'as was equivalent to the break between Roman Catholics and Protestants. Howard also explained that many of the religious groups Anstey had discussed in relation to the

Shi'as, such as the Zoroastrians and Masdakians, existed prior to Islam, and were therefore not valid points of comparison. Howard implied that Anstey was unaware of the actual history of divisions within Islam and went on to describe the Shi'as as a historically oppressed people, maintaining that the "Persian Mahomedans had been subjected to the cruel tyranny of the Arabs for 800 years."[35] He used Burton's *Pilgrimage to Mecca* to describe how poorly Persians were treated when they visited holy shrines, noting that while "Turks and Arabs were allowed to approach the sacred tombs . . . the poor Persians were thrust rudely aside to make way for them."[36]

Howard cited these and other examples of persecution to make the argument that Shi'i groups, such as the Isma'ilis, were forced to keep their practices hidden, saying, "It was during this time they had contracted habits of secrecy."[37] Howard attempted to show that dominant Muslim communities, such as Turks and Arabs, ostracized Shi'i groups such as the Isma'ilis. Howard further argued that Isma'ilis were only labeled "assassins" because their history of oppression had forced them to commit acts of violence, and "who would therefore say . . . that they were altogether wrong in striking where they could."[38] Howard also likened Isma'ilis to Jews, noting that Jews had kept their religious rites a secret from the Romans in order to avoid violent punishment; similarly, he claimed, if Isma'ilis had been open about their practices, "they would have been burned or have had their heads taken off."[39]

As Anstey attempted to demonstrate the heresy of the Isma'ilis and the Shi'as, Howard focused on depicting Sunnis as dominating and tyrannical. The defense's witness Kureem Khan, confirmed this point, "Sunnis have always been and are to this day, a bigoted people; and in some parts of Central Asia, Shias, who are known to be such, run the risk of losing their lives at the hand of Sunnis."[40] During his testimony, the second defense lawyer, Mr. McCulloch, added to this negative depiction of Sunnis; he stated, "Even now people don't like to offend the Sunnis, for they are a fierce race. At the festival of Muharram, the Shias weep bitter, but the Sunnis dress up as tigers, dance, and sing."[41]

Although the defense characterized the Sunnis as oppressive and coldhearted, they nonetheless had to address the fact that many Khojas actually practiced Sunni customs, and that Bombay Khojas in particular followed Sunni rites of practice. The defendants tried to downplay the influence of Sunni culture in Bombay Khoja life, claiming that Khojas practiced only a few Sunni customs, such as marriage and funeral rites. They further maintained that the only reason Khojas practiced these Sunni customs at all was because, historically, they were forced to emulate the behavior

of ruling majorities and conceal their own religious practices. Howard thus took Anstey's characterization of the Isma'ilis' as deceitful, which had been used as proof of their subversiveness, and rather than denying it, explained it as an understandable disposition and response to tyranny. According to this logic, the Khojas' adopting of certain Sunni customs was an inevitable consequence of religious oppression.

During this discussion of mental reservation, Anstey reiterated his position that it was a morally dubious practice. When Anstey had asked Goolam Rasul what the Sunni position on mental reservation was, Rasul had stated that it was forbidden by the Qur'an—the primary text that Anstey used to determine a practice's legitimacy. When Anstey questioned Kureem Khan about mental reservation, Khan agreed that the practice was forbidden by the Qur'an but stated that it was encouraged in the *ginâns*, the Khoja songs of devotion. According to Khan, these texts decreed that "one could engage in mental reservation in circumstances of danger and in order to save life."[42] Khan's position provided the defense with evidence of an Isma'ili custom practiced within the Khoja community, mental reservation. Furthermore, showing that mental reservation was supported in the *ginâns*, which were texts specific to the Khojas, not only supported the defense's case that Khoja practices were distinct from Sunni customs but also implied a connection between Khojas and the Aga Khan.

Howard insisted that Khojas had no relationship with Sunni Islam, nor any connection to the Qur'an. In his efforts to disassociate the Khojas from classical Islam, Howard cited Perry's 1847 statement to the court: "There were no scholars or men of learning among *khojas* and they possessed no translation of the Koran." Instead of relying on the Qur'an as his primary source document, Howard brought *Dasavatâr* to the forefront of his argument. The defense concentrated on, first, demonstrating the centrality of the text in Khoja worship, and second, illustrating the significance of the text in history. To support the first point, Howard explained that "Desatir" was read over dying Khojas. Second, as reported in the *Bombay Gazette*, he "brought forward a good deal of learned research to show that the ten incarnations bore evidence of having been written to smooth the conversion of Hindoos to Mahomedans, and that nine of these incarnations were of Hindoo."[43] The text was understood as facilitating conversion to Isma'ili Islam because the defense interpreted the tenth avatar of *Dasavatâr* as Ali. This interpretation of *Dasavatâr*, as I show below, proved crucial in laying out the official Isma'ili conversion narrative.

The second defense lawyer, Mr. McCulloch, explained that if Khojas were identified only as "Mahomedan," then they would have to be

considered Shi'as, not Sunnis: "While he thought it had been proved conclusively that it was impossible to assert the khojas were a pure Suni people, yet he considered that, so far as they were Mahomedans, they were Shias. They were Hindus with a Mahomedan cultivation and Mahomedan development of their creed; but so far as they were Mahomedans they were undoubtedly till this day Shias. The relators in the present suit had been styled by Mr. Anstey 'reformers of the kojah tribe.' Now, that was just what they were. They were attempting to reform—to put down what they called 'ancient superstitions' to alter the ancient traditional belief of the community."[44] Just as the plaintiffs had claimed that the Aga Khan's authority was a recent development, the defense argued that the plaintiffs' interpretation of Khoja religion was not supported by history. The defense stated that a minority group of "reformers" had decided "the ancient traditional belief of the Kojahs deserved opprobrium."[45] Howard explained that even though they came to that conclusion, "probably honest enough," the fact that they could not get other Khojas to accept their interpretations meant that it was "their duty to leave the community."[46] The majority of Khojas, Howard argued, believed that "the whole of the property belonged to the Aga Khan, and that the property had been purchased out of contributions which were originally made to him."[47] Howard made the point that it was completely erroneous to claim that the Aga Khan set himself up as pir for the first time in 1850. He provided evidence of the contributions made to the Aga Khan to demonstrate that he had been the "religious chief of a religious community" for his entire adult life.[48] In court, Howard read letters dated between 1793 and 1836, written by both the Aga Khan and his father to the Khoja *jamat*. Howard offered these letters as proof that the Khojas had paid remittances to the Aga Khan and even his ancestors.

After demonstrating that the relationship between the Khojas and the Aga Khan existed long before 1850, the defense wanted to affirm the Aga Khan's noble character and show that he was a well-respected man of high stature: "The Aga Khan was not merely a religious chief. He was also a great nobleman—he was the son-in-law of a king and was born of the most ancient and illustrious lineage in the world; he was a soldier too, and an ally—an honored ally—of the British Government, who still drew an honorary pension for his services in war."[49]

Anstey, on the other hand, attempted to malign the Aga Khan's character, mentioning the Aga Khan's many wives and his tendency to spend his money on his racehorses. The judge seemed to sympathize with the defense's portrayal of the Aga Khan. Justice Arnould consistently ruled that Anstey's statements about the Aga Khan's character were irrelevant

and instead supported the defense's response to these allegations, namely that how the Aga Khan chose to spend his money was immaterial because the focus of the case was the Khojas' religious identity.[50]

Judgment

Justice Arnould's decision unequivocally supported the Aga Khan's position. The case had begun as a property dispute, but in his ruling, Arnould framed the discussion around broader questions of identity, specifically religious identity:

> First: What are the Sunnis as distinct from Shias?
> Secondly: Who and What are the Shia Imam Ismailia?
> Thirdly: Who and what is the first defendant, the Aga Khan?
> Fourthly: Who and what are the khojas and what are and have been their relations with the first defendant and his ancestors.
> Fifthly: What have been the relations of the first defendant, Aga Khan, with the particular community to which the relators and plaintiffs belong, viz. the khoja community of Bombay?

Arnould's analysis began with fundamental questions about the origins of Islam and concluded with the relationship of the Bombay Khojas to the Aga Khan; throughout the judgment, he managed to seamlessly connect each question to the next. Addressing the distinction between Sunnis and Shi'as, Arnould explained that while the Sunnis are the "orthodox Mussulmans" whose profession of faith declares that "There is no God but God and Mahomet is the Apostle of God," the Shi'as held "the elevation of Ali to an almost co-equal position with the Apostle of God himself."[51] Arnould also specifically mentioned the issue of succession after the death of Muhammad and stated that "the general expectation of Islam had been that Ali, the first disciple, the beloved companion of the Apostle of God, the husband of his only surviving child Fatima, would be the first caliph."[52]

This particular interpretation of the early period of Islam reveals Arnould's acceptance of the Shi'i perspective on the issue of succession, which claims that Ali ought to have been the first successor to Muhammad. Arnould also adopted the defense's view of the Shi'a as historical victims of persecution, and supported this understanding with his own somewhat overly dramatic reading of Ali's death. "The assassination of Ali caused a profound sensation in the Mahometan world. He was, and deserved to be, deeply beloved, being clearly and beyond comparison the most heroic of that time fertile in heroes—a brave man and wise, and

magnanimous and just, and self-denying in a degree hardly exceeded by any character in history . . ."[54] Arnould's subsequent explanations of Shi'ism convey a similarly favorable impression of the Shi'a. For example, he described the Saffavid period in Persia as the "great Shia empire" that allowed the Persian population, "without dread of Sunni persecution, to indulge freely in the expression of its sorrow for the martyred son of Ali and Fatima."[55] Arnould agreed with the defense's description of Sunnis as coldhearted and unsympathetic. He compared the ways in which Sunnis and the Shi'as observe Ashura, the day the martyrdom of Husayn is commemorated. He writes that Sunnis celebrate "with riot and ill-managed merriment, with ribald jests, and the coarse antics of mountebanks dressed up in the skins of wild beasts; the Shias on the other hand, assemble sadly in their house, or their Imambaras, where they listen with tears and loud sobbings to the pathetic story."[56]

After he delineated the differences between Sunnis and Shia, Arnould moved to his next question, "Who and What are the Shia Imami Ismailis?" He explained that they believe that Isma'il, the seventh imam after Ali, is the last of the revealed imams, and that the "final manifestation of Ali (as an incarnation of God) is to come before the end of all things to judge the world."[57] Arnould also outlined key historical moments, such as the caliphate of the Abbasids (750–1171), in which Isma'ilis were victims of Sunni persecution. He introduced these historical examples to support his opinion that Isma'ilis adopted *taqiyya* or "concealment of religious opinion," because of this persecution. Arnould restated the defense's position that Isma'ilis were often forced to hide their religious practices and offered the same passage from Burton's *Pilgrimage to Mecca* that the defense had cited to argue that *taqiyya* was a practice of self-preservation. In addition, Arnould connected this practice to the succession dispute, noting that at Mecca, "Shia pilgrims even force themselves to pay outward and most reluctant homage to the tombs of Abubekr, Omar, and Osman—the bitter foes of their venerated Ali," and that this was practiced "with a view of avoiding persecution, insult, or ill-usage for religion's sake."[58]

His analysis of *taqiyya* and the history of Isma'ilis as a persecuted community brought him to the subject of Isma'ilis as assassins. Again, repeating the defense's position on the issue, Arnould described the infamous eleventh-century Isma'ili figure Hasan-i Sabbah as an example of the ways in which Isma'ilis were forced to respond to a history of persecution. He explained that having been persecuted by the Sunni majority, Hasan-i Sabbah "organized a system of terror which fought with the dagger against the sword and revenged persecution with assassination."[59] Arnould noted

that the story of Hasan-i Sabbah is "connected with the principal defendant in the suit, the Aga Khan," through the figure of Hasan 'Ala Zikrihi Salam, "the 4th in succession from Hassan-bin-Saba, of those whom Von Hammer calls 'the hereditary Grand Masters of the order of the assassins of Alamut.'"[60] Arnould explained that Hasan-i Sabbah was not a lineal descendant of Isma'il, the seventh imam, but Hasan 'Ala Zikrihi Salam was, and the Aga Khan was a lineal descendant of Hasan 'Ala Zikrihi Salam. After Hasan 'Ala Zikrihi Salam, there were four successors, followed by complete destruction of Alamut from the Mongol invasion. Arnould continued to explain, "Although by this utter overthrow, in which men, women, and children were unsparingly put to the edge of the sword . . . the race of the Ismailis still survived in Persia, and the hereditary succession of their unrevealed Imams is traced in an unbroken line down to the Aga Khan, the first defendant in this suit, in the pedigree already referred to."[61]

Arnould acknowledged the existence of significant gaps in the historical record and even cited witnesses' statements that cast doubt on the hereditary claims of the Aga Khan as a descendant of Hasan 'Ala Zikrihi Salam,[62] but he nevertheless decided that "this is not the place, of course, for any attempt to clear up the obscurity of Asiatic pedigree."[63] Arnould answered the third question he had set forth, "Who and what is the first defendant, the Aga Khan?" by formally declaring the pedigree of the Aga Khan: "'His Highness Aga Khan Mehelati' is the hereditary chief and unrevealed Imam of the Ismailis—the present or living holder of the Musnad of the Imamat—claiming descent in direct line from Ali, the Vicar of God, through the 7th and (according to the Ismaili creed) the last of the revealed Imams—Ismail, the son of Jaffir Seeduck."[64] With this statement, and the previous discussion of the Aga Khan's lineal connection to Hassan II, Arnould demonstrated Aga Khan's connection to Ali through the first seven Isma'ili imams. Arnould was thereby able to provide a seamless historical account of Isma'ili Islam from its origins to the present.

To address the next set of his questions, regarding the Aga Khan's relationship to the Khojas, Arnould began with a discussion of the Aga Khan's departure from Persia and the process by which he acquired his leadership in the Bombay *jamat*. Citing Watson's *History of Persia*, Arnould explained that a particular situation arose during the period when the Aga Khan was the governor of Kirman. He describes how a "Persian of very low origin," who happened to be "the chief favourite and minion of the all-powerful minister of Persia," asked to marry one of the Aga Khan's daughters. In response, Arnould wrote, this proposal "was felt by the Aga

Khan to be a great insult" because of the suitor's lower rank. The Aga Khan therefore denied his request. However, because this "Persian of low origin" was the prime minister's favorite, the Aga Khan worried that his snub would insult the prime minister. Consequently, in Arnould's words, "having thus made the most powerful man in Persia his deadly enemy, he probably felt that his best chance of safety was to assert himself in arms—a course not uncommon with the great feudatories of disorganized Persia."[65]

Arnould interpreted the Aga Khan's actions as heroic and believed his rebellions were justified. When Arnould interpreted later episodes in the Aga Khan's personal history, he glossed over the Aga Khan's complicated negotiations with the British in Afghanistan and Baluchistan, mentioning only his time in Sind, to show that the Aga Khan had no problems supporting himself there as "the *khojas* of that province have always been among his most zealous adherents."[66]

Arnould then moved moved to a discussion of the Aga Khan's support and popularity among the Khojas. When discussing the Aga Khan's arrival in Bombay, Arnould explained that the Aga Khan "was received by the cordial homage of the whole *khoja* population of this city and its neighborhood."[67] Arnould's analysis ignored the existence of the Khojas who resisted his arrival and interference in community affairs, and instead described the Aga Khan's transition into to the Khoja *jamat* as conflict free. He simply stated that the Aga Khan made the *jamat* his principal headquarters and presided over the *jamat khana*, especially during "the more sacred anniversaries of the Muhammadan calendar,"[68] without any reference to any of the significant opposition the Aga Khan had to deal with from the time of his arrival. Arnould assumed the defense's position that the Khojas of Bombay welcomed the Aga Khan's presence and authority in the *jamat*.

Arnould then turned to a discussion of the Khojas' religious practices. With regard to the subject of payments, he noted, "From the very outset of their separate existence as a distinctive community, the *khojas* have been in the habit of transmitting as to their "sirkar-sahib" (lord and master) voluntary offerings (zakat) out of religious feeling (dharm)."[69] Furthermore, he claimed that "all these payments are made under headers such as 'sirkar-sahib,' 'pir salamat,' etc. which, though varied in form, all indicate one and the same appropriation, namely to the Imam of the Ismailis, as the Murshed or spiritual head of the *khojas*."[70] Arnould cited the defense witnesses' statements to support his contention that the various divine epithets all refer to the Aga Khan, and connected these statements to evidence from Khoja community account records as

proof that the Khojas knowingly and willingly made payments to the Aga Khan.

Arnould's judgment concluded with a final question: to what form of "mahometanism" had the Khojas been converted? Using Perry's 1847 statements as a precedent, Arnould first explained that both parties agreed that Khojas were converted by Pir Sadrudin four hundred years ago. Next, he wrote that although a few claim that Pir Sadrudin was a Sunni, he agreed with the majority opinion in the community that Pir Sadrudin was an Isma'ili missionary sent by one of the ancestors of the Aga Khan. This majority belief, he writes, is "the tradition uniformly prevailing among the great bulk of the *khoja* community—among all, *khojas* in short, except that numerically small proportion of them who are represented by the relators and plaintiffs."[71]

Arnould explained that the primary reason why he agreed with the majority opinion was evidence in *Dasavatar*. Both parties conceded the point that *Dasavatar* was "invariably read over khojas who are at the point of death";[72] therefore, in his opinion, *Dasavatār* was the text of "religious observance" among Khojas: "When the book is read in the *jamat khana* of the *khojas*, it is the tenth chapter (as appears in the evidence) which is along now-a-days seriously attended to. When that chapter is commenced, the congregation of the people rises and remains standing till it is concluded, making profound reverences whenever the reader pronounces the name of the 'Most Holy Ali' (Mowla Motizir Ali)."[73]

In terms of whether Khojas were Sunni or Shi'i, he noted that each of the Hindu avatars were the subjects of the first nine chapters, and the tenth chapter "treats of the incarnation of the 'Most Holy Ali'"; he concluded that "no Sunni could have composed, compiled, or adapted such a work as this; the idolatry of the first nine chapters, the semi-deification Ali implied the tenth chapter, alike are utterly impossible."[74] Arnould argued that while the text could not possibly be the work of a Sunni, it could definitely be the work of an Isma'ili missionary who, because of mental reservation *(taqiyya)*, assumed "the standpoint of the intended convertite."[75] He concluded, "This is exactly what this book does: it assumes the nine incarnations of Vishnu to be true as far as they go, not the whole truth, and then supplements the imperfect Vishnuvite system by superadding the cardinal doctrine of the Ismailis, the incarnation and coming manifestation (or avatar) of the 'Most Holy Ali.'"[76]

The conclusions Arnould drew in his judgment resolved any ambiguities about Khojas and *Dasavatār* that existed in Perry's 1847 judgment. Arnould adopted the basic outline of Perry's preliminary assertions, that Khojas were converted four hundred years ago by Sadrudin, but provided

further detail by explaining that Khojas were Hindus converted specifically to Isma'ili Shi'ism. *Dasavatār* played an essential role in the construction of this narrative, as Arnould's discussion began with the figure of Ali in early Islamic history and concluded by finding the same figure in the Khojas' book of "religious observance." Whereas in Perry's ruling *Dasavatār* and Sadrudin served as unique aspects of Khoja practice and history, differentiating the group from both Hindus and Muslims, in Arnould's judgment, *Dasavatār*'s theology provided evidence of the Khojas' connection to Persian Isma'ilis. *Dasavatār*'s portrayal of Ali as the last of the Vaishnava avatars reflected, for Arnould, the "cardinal doctrine of the Ismailis," which attested to the history of the Khoja community's conversion and to the continuation of the Shi'i Isma'ili narrative in the Indian context.

Conclusion

Unlike Perry's ruling in 1847, Justice Arnould's judgment, from the beginning, focused solely on the question of religion, discussing the religious identity both of the Khojas and of the Aga Khan. The specifics of Arnould's decision drew from defense's case: their explication of Shi'i history, the connections between Isma'ilis and Khojas, and the Aga Khan's status as nobleman and leader of Khojas. The structure of the debate, however, emerged from the plaintiffs' argument, which had generated the overarching question of the trial: whether Khojas were Sunni or Shi'i. These terms of religious difference were introduced in their bill of complaint and formed the central argument of their case. By arguing that Khojas were Sunni, the plaintiffs attempted to dismiss the Shi'a as a heretical sect and, furthermore, prove that the Aga Khan's status was fabricated and sacrilegious. The defense, however, was able to undermine the plaintiffs' arguments with a more convincing case, proving that the Shi'a were a recognized sect of Islam, that Isma'ilis and Khojas shared a common history, and that, most importantly, the majority of Khojas supported the Aga Khan as their leader.

The defense built a strong case through their skillful responses to the plaintiffs' arguments. Several key texts and events also operated in the defense's favor. The first was the judgment of 1847; the defense quoted Perry's statements to support their argument that the Khojas' beliefs and practices were unique. The defense's case was also bolstered by the argument they made about Sadrudin's sectarian affiliation. Arnould's judgment elaborated on Perry's description of Sadrudin's conversion of the

Khojas and explained that Sadrudin had been a Shi'i missionary dispatched to India to convert the Khojas. Arnould further argued that the Aga Khan was a descendant of the imam who had dispatched Sadrudin. Arnould's conclusion reiterated the exact connection between Sadrudin and the Aga Khan articulated in the Aga Khan's letter of 1850—which had been read aloud by the plaintiffs. The claims about the connections among the Khojas, the Aga Khan, and Sadrudin that the Aga Khan made in 1850 complemented the outline of Khoja history given in Perry's statements, and, in turn, coalesced into a narrative that Arnould found convincing.

The defense's case was also helped by the fact that the court recognized the Aga Khan as a figure of high status. The defense's argument that the Aga Khan was a "great nobleman" and "ally" shielded him from the moral critiques of the plaintiffs. The plaintiffs' criticism of the Aga Khan's personal life—such as his fondness for horse racing, his spending habits, his multiple wives—were deemed irrelevant to the central issue of whether Khojas were Sunni or Shi'i.

Finally, the most multivalent piece of evidence that worked in the defense' favor was *Dasavatār*. The text served several functions in the trial. First, Anstey introduced it alongside the Persian text *Dasatīr*, as part of his discussion of Persian religions. This move ended up supporting the defense's case, as Anstey confused the two texts, which in turn forced him to state that Khojas and the Aga Khan shared certain practices and texts. Second, *Dasavatār* repeatedly appeared in the trial, but without any detailed explanation of its significance—until the defense was able to provide one. The defense opportunely offered an interpretation of *Dasavatār* that allowed all of their different arguments to fall into place. They created a single narrative that incorporated and explained the Aga Khan's assertions that he was connected to the Khojas via Sadrudin, the fact that mental reservation was found in the *ginâns* but not the Qur'an, and the point that the Qur'an held little significance in Khoja ritual. *Dasavatār* was understood, thus, as both unique to Khojas and theologically connected to the Isma'ilis. Most importantly, *Dasavatār* allowed Arnould to define Khoja identity as previous Hindu, but because of Sadrudin, Isma'ili Muslim.

The third and perhaps more oblique role that *Dasavatār* played in the trial was as a devotional text of the Khojas. The defense argued that the majority of the Khojas offered payments to "sirkar-sahib" and "pir-salamat." Arnould resolved the confusion about these different titles by stating that all the epithets referred to the Aga Khan. As will be discussed in the next chapter, these names are commonly used as reference to objects

of devotion in the *gināns*. The beliefs and practices of the Khojas drew from *ginān* poetry, and the tradition of making payments to the Aga Khan was a common practice among Khojas in the nineteenth century. Through an analysis of practices and conceptions of the divine in the *gināns*, the following chapter will examine how Satpanth practices of the *ginans* offer further support for the 1866 ruling that found in favor of the Aga Khan.

CHAPTER THREE

Reading Satpanth against the Judicial Archive

> What is the Dasavatar? It is a treatise in ten chapters containing, as indeed its name imports, the account of ten avatars or incarnations each dealt with in a separate chapter. The first nine of these chapters treat of the nine incarnations of the Hindu god Vishnu, the tenth chapter treats of the incarnation of the "Most Holy Ali."
>
> *Judgment in The Advocate General vs. Muhammad Hazeri Hussein, otherwise called Aga Khan, 1866*

In 1847, Justice Perry had been the first to articulate an official description of *Dasavatar*. Perry described the religious text of the Khojas as "a strong combination of Hindu articles of faith with tenets of Islam."[1] In 1866, *Dasavatār* provided Justice Arnould with textual proof that the shared religious identity of the Khojas and the Aga Khan was "Shia Imami Ismaili." The defense set forth the argument that *Dasavatār* was an Isma'ili text that facilitated the conversion of the Khojas, and in doing so, confirmed a theological link between the Khojas and the Aga Khan. Invoking the defense's argument in tandem with the precedent provided by Perry's ruling, Justice Arnould established a conclusive and coherent narrative about the "Shia Imami Ismaili" identity of the Khojas and the Aga Khan in his final judgment.

The outcome of 1866 canonized one interpretation of *Dasavatār* as a record of the Khojas' conversion. During the trial, however, *Dasavatār* was also described as central to the religious rites of the Khojas. Both the plaintiffs and the defense agreed that *Dasavatār* was read over dying Khojas, and in his judgment, Justice Arnould also acknowledged the ritual function of this text.[2] In this chapter, I explore ideas of religious practice in *Dasavatār* and the *gināns*—what is described as the Satpanth (true path). Studying the *gināns* from the perspective of Satpanth rather than "sect" opens up an alternative conception of religious participation and belonging to that which was defined by the court. This kind of reading,

I argue, provides a way to think about the religion of the Khojas outside the language of identity.

Approaching *Dasavatār* and the *gināns* through the terms of Satpanth practice rather than conversion offers new insights into the case. Take, for example, the issue of the Aga Khan's religious authority: although his role as imam was officially decided by the colonial state, his revered status among Khojas can be traced to Satpanth practices as well. My reading of *Dasavatār* explores how paying tributes is part of Satpanth teaching in the text. In *Dasavatār* and the *gināns* more broadly, this particular ritual is connected to the veneration of divine figures often described by the names of "Saheb" and "Pir." One of the ways in which Arnould decided that the Aga Khan was the leader of the Khojas was by investigating how and to whom the community made tribute payments. From evidence the defense provided, Arnould concluded that all the titles to which Khojas made payments, such as "sirkar-sahib" and "pir," referred to the Aga Khan, this conclusion, in turn, supported the Aga Khan's claim as rightful owner of the property.

Justice Arnould's understanding of *Dasavatār* assumed that the poem's first nine chapters were Hindu in orientation and that the final chapter was Muslim. This interpretation, I argue, created an artificial division that did not exist intrinsically in the text. I analyze the ninth chapter, *Buddhavatār*, and the tenth chapter, *Dasamo Avatār*, to show that both of these poems are thematically related and emphasize the same Satpanth belief: an exigency to engage in the correct path of everyday religious practice because End Time is looming. Eschatology, the "doctrine of last things," is traditionally a term of Western theology, referring to Jewish and Christian beliefs about the Last Judgment, the Apocalypse, and related matters. In *Dasamo Avatār*, the first poem I discuss, the end of the world is presented through the perspective of Shi'i *mahdī* messianism, in which the "expected deliverer is to come and humble or destroy the forces of wickedness and establish the rule of justice and equity on earth."[1] This eschatological vision is narrated through the anticipated confrontation between the figure of the tenth avatar and the evil demon, Kalingo. This deliverer, however, is not exclusively "Muslim." He is depicted as both the Shi'i *mahdī* and the last of the avatars of Vishnu. As I explain further below, this central eschatological moment is tied to an equally significant component of the poem: the message to follow Satpanth practices correctly. These practices, described as integral to one's *dharma*, ensure liberation *(mukti)*, from the cycle of death and rebirth *(karma)*. Whereas in *Dasamo Avatār* expectation of the tenth avatar's messianic arrival necessitates the proper observance of Satpanth practices, in the next set of poems I analyze, the *Yog Vānī* ("Utterances on Yoga"), Satpanth practices

are defined through the religious authority of the *satguru* (true guru), who underscores the importance of ritual observance as a way to engage and simultaneously critique the present world. In *Buddhavatār*, the final poem of discussion, the Buddha [illegible] center of the story. Similar to *Dasamo Avatār* and the *Yog Vānī* poems, *Buddhavatār* too stresses the imminence of End Time. [illegible] Buddha is presented to a *chandal*, or low-caste, guise, and he converts key figures of the famous classical epic *Mahabharata*, the Pandavas, to his new teaching.[2] In *Buddhavatār*, following the correct path requires a strident [illegible] of Brahmin hegemony and the acceptance of the cycle of the avatars.

Buddhavatār [illegible] and the *Yog Vānī* poems all emphasize an imminent turning point whereby the "this world prison will burst apart."[3] The figure of divine [illegible] the form of a guru, avatar, or imam—guides the devotee onto the correct path of belief. The guru/avatar/imam moves [illegible] ideas from both the Indic and Islamicate religious [illegible]. This figure establishes a set of proper teachings that function [illegible] of the [illegible] *varnasrama dharma* structure.[4] At the same time, the guru/imam/avatar expresses Qur'anic ideas of prophetic renewal and the Day of Judgment, concepts that then become infused with new meaning and significance in the *gināns*. In holding together the central practices of the Satpanth, the guru/imam/avatar is integral to understanding the contours of this peculiar tradition of South Asian Islam, but also, for understanding the Satpanth's role in the history of Islam's expansion.

Dasavatār and the Problem of Syncretism

The specific definition of "sect" that Justice Arnould used to classify the Khojas was premised on a Christian paradigm: a dominant "church" represents a religion's center and "sects" are groups that break off from that official center while retaining certain of its fundamental elements.[5] Applying this church/sect dichotomy to an analysis of Sunnis and Shi'as, Arnould identified the Khojas as a "sub-sect" of Shi'as through his reading of *Dasavatār*. In Arnould's ruling, he explained that while the Sunnis are the "orthodox Mussulmans" whose profession of faith declares that "There is no God but God and Mahomet is the Apostle of God," the Shi'as hold "the elevation of Ali to an almost co-equal position with the Apostle of God himself."[6] Deciding that the figure of Ali was the key to the doctrinal difference between Sunnis and Shi'as, Arnould provided textual evidence from the final chapter of *Dasavatār* to prove its Shi'i identity; he explained that "no Sunni could have composed, compiled, or adapted such a work as

this; the idolatry of the first nine chapters, the semi-deification Ali implied the tenth chapter, alike are utterly impossible."[18] Furthermore, Arnould attributed the organization of *Dasavatār* to Isma'ili missionaries who, in his opinion, assumed "the standpoint of the intended convertite"; the tenth chapter proved that the text as a whole was Isma'ili in orientation because, according to his argument, it "supplements the imperfect Vishnavite system by superadding the cardinal doctrine of the Ismailis."[19]

Scholarly discussions that frame *Dasavatār* and the *ginān*s as Isma'ili poetry reiterate this position. According to Azim Nanji, the most significant aspect of *Dasavatār* is its Isma'ili theological message. He argues that *Dasavatār*'s "chief value" rests in its central belief of the Isma'ili tradition where the tenth avatar of Vishnu will arrive under the name of "Nakalanki" ("Stainless One"), whom he claims refers to as Ali, the son-in-law of the Prophet and the *Mahdī*. "Nakalanki" is expected to arrive and kill the demon Kalinga, the embodiment of evil.[20] According to Nanji, this notion of "Imam as divine epiphany," confirms *Dasavatār*'s identity as an Isma'ili text. To support this interpretation, Nanji explains that the first nine avatars in the *ginān*s correspond to the names of the Sanskrit *puranic* order of Vishnu's incarnations. However, the figure of the tenth avatar diverges from the Sanskrit/Indic tradition: there the tenth avatar is not the Vaishnava Kalki, but the Isma'ili Nakalanki. In Nanji's analysis, the figure of the final avatar represents an ultimate rupture and disjuncture between classical Vaishnava and Isma'ili theologies. Nanji does acknowledge a similarity between Vaishnava and Isma'ili conceptions of time and notes that both the avatar and imam are figures representing "divine epiphany." Nonetheless, in his analysis, the elements of Vaishnavism in the *ginān*s are ultimately relegated to a supporting role, only serving to provide a framework that facilitates the integration of Isma'ili thought.[21]

The closing lines of the *Dasama Avatār* of Imam Shah, however, reveal the simultaneity of Vaishnava and Shi'a idioms in the description of the tenth avatar:

> tāre dasamon rupa tiam nakalanki nārāyena rupa sāra
> tian deve dhareyo sirī mola muratajā alīnu avatara
> (Then the tenth form is truly the form of Nakalanki Narayana.
> There the deva has assumed the form of the blessed Maula Murtada Alī)[22]

This kind of juxtaposition, in which different epithets are applied to the same figure, occurs frequently throughout the poem. Here, the honorific titles given to the tenth avatar—"Nakalanki," "Narayana," and "Maula Murtada Ali"—force the reader to dislodge the figure from a conventional Vaishnava/*puranic* context. The various names produce a kind of tension

that precludes the possibility of ascertaining the precise "identity" of the avatar along sectarian lines, as "Nakalanki," "Narayana," "deva," and "Ali" are positioned side by side with no one appellation given priority.

Despite the presence of both Vaishnava and Shi'a references to the tenth avatar, Nanji singles out the appellation "Nakalanki" among all others and posits this title as representative of Isma'ili thought. Scholars appear to have focused on this specific epithet as the tenth avatar's "identity" (in spite of its infrequence in the text) because a particular etymological analysis of it has provided support for larger claims about *Dasavatār* as an Isma'ili conversion text. In this analysis, "Nakalanki" derives from the Sanskrit "Kalki," meaning "stain" or "blemish," plus "ni" or "na," the Sanskrit negating prefix. This leads to the conclusion that "Kalki" plus "na" refers to the "non-Kalki," or the non-Vaishnava avatar, which is then equated to the "Stainless One," or Ali.[23]

Although the above analyses of *Dasavatār* effectively situate the text as an expression of Isma'ili Islam, some scholars have moved away from a sectarian perspective on the *ginān*s and adopted a more syncretistic understanding of the texts. Tazim Kassam's analysis of the *ginān Brahma Prakasha*, for example, operates on a syncretistic model. Her approach is based on an analytical structure which acknowledges first the "coexistence of diverse elements," second, the "coherence of their combined configuration," and third, "retention of self-identities."[24] What distinguishes Kassam's approach from the sectarian interpretations of *Dasavatār* as a conversion text is the fact that she acknowledges an overlap between different semantic domains.[25] She attempts to move beyond the prioritization of an Isma'ili component, but her study nevertheless operates on the assumption of an identity-based separation between "Hindu and Ismaili viewpoints," each of which represents a distinct ontological entity.[26] In this way, her syncretistic approach relies on the same binaries of the sectarian perspective.

The theory of syncretism has been addressed in other studies of Indo-Islamic literature, such as the Sufi literature of Bengal. Tony Stewart, for example, explains that studies of Bengali Sufi literature have tended to conceive of the tradition as either deviant or hybrid, both of which, for him, come down to a perspective of an "unholy alliance of religious entities that should be kept apart in an ideal world."[27] In attempting to rethink notions of syncretism, Stewart proposes understanding the process by which religious vocabulary, and in turn, the shape of Bengali vernacular language, develops in light of Nida's theory of "dynamic equivalence."

To demonstrate the relevance of this theory, Stewart provides an example of this phenomenon from the Bengali Sufi text *Nabi Vamsha*, in which the author, Saiyad Sultan, adopts the term "avatar" to describe

the Prophet Muhammad. The choice to describe Muhammad as an avatar is what Stewart explains as a search for a "term of equivalence" on the part of the author.[31] Stewart argues that deploying the term "avatar" to describe Muhammad is a process that transpires between two opposing linguistic idioms, Perso-Arabic and Sanskrit-based Bengali, which he situates as two separate linguistic loci of source language (Arabic and Persian) and target/receiving language (Bengali).[32] Although "nabi" (Prophet) and "avatar" each are originally unrelated, as they come from different language sources, they can be drawn together as equivalent terms because they both refer to divinely inspired guidance.

Both "nabi" and "avatar" appear frequently in *ginān* poetry, and so Stewart's discussion of equivalence could in theory be relevant to this study. However, the dichotomous structural division which Stewart delineates in Bengali Sufi literature cannot be applied to the *gināns*. In the *gināns*, both Sanskrit and Perso-Arabic words occur with the same frequency, while Gujarati, Hindi, or some combination of the two, comprise about half of the language in the texts. Other various languages comprise the remaining 8 percent.[33] While Stewart's "dynamic equivalence" theory attempts to complicate syncretistic models, his approach is ultimately premised on an essential dialectic opposition: each word must first be understood as distinct from its "counterpart" before any kind of equivalence is drawn. In this way, his method, like Kassam's, shares the same binary premise of sectarian and syncretistic approaches.

There are others who argue that syncretistic readings of concepts such as "nabi" and "avatar" undermine the significance of Islam as its own independent idiom.[34] Richard Eaton, for example, comes to a very different set of conclusions about the text *Nabi Vamsha*. He states, unequivocally, that the *Nabi Vamsha* cannot be considered syncretistic at all. Eaton claims that although Bengali deities and Hebrew prophets figure equally in *Nabi Vamsha*, this story of "the family of the prophet" (its literal translation) draws primarily from Judeo-Islamic ideas, most important of which is its proclamation of the finality and superiority of Muhammad's prophetic mission.[35] Eaton's analysis of the centrality and finality of Muhammad's prophecy in the *Nabi Vamsha* diverges with the syncretism model on the grounds that the text fundamentally expresses normative Islamic theology that "fully accords with the Quranic understanding of prophecy and God's role in human history."[36]

I would follow Eaton's countersyncretistic position and argue that *Dasamo Avatār*, like *Nabi Vamsha*, ought to be understood as propagating, albeit in a unique form, ideas that stem from the fundamental teachings of the Qur'an. Eaton specifically emphasizes the point that *Nabi Vamsha* promotes the ultimate authority of the Prophet. In this way *Nabi Vamsha* deploys the logic of supersession, on which the authority of Qur'an revelation is based: the Qur'an conveys the finality and superiority of its theology in relation to the authority of earlier prophets and traditions. *Dasamo Avatār* likewise asserts its authority in relation to earlier texts and ideas, however these are primarily Vedic and *purāṇic*. Although the content of *Dasamo Avatār* is clearly distinct from the Qur'an, *Dasamo Avatār* structurally replicates the specific dialectic of Qur'anic theology that on the one hand, is wholly dependent on its textual and theological antecedents and on the other hand, abrogates the authority of those antecedents.

I also situate *Dasamo Avatār* as an expression of Qur'anic Islam because of its message of prophetic renewal. This approach diverges slightly from Eaton's position. Eaton's discussion is situated within a specifically Sunni conception of time. His argument about *Nabi Vamsha* assumes that all prophetic possibility concludes with Muhammad's death—the geographic context of which is Arabia or "Judeo-Islamic." From a Shi'i perspective, however, divine intersection does not come to an end with Muhammad's death. Muhammad's spiritual and temporal power, according to Shi'i theology, needed to be sustained and therefore transferred charismatically.[37] According to the imamate Shi'i perspective, the doctrine of the imamate, evolved from in the early years of Islam, the idea of a leader who would bring justice to the oppressed to a highly complex concept of the eschatological hidden imam. This belief in hidden messiahs marked a major shift in the conception of the imam from the early period. For the developed idea of hidden imams brought with it the notion that imams possessed divine knowledge and powers of prediction, most notably the "proper time for the messianic Imam to strike."[38]

Dasamo Avatār provides a narrative of this "strike" in the next section. I analyze that story in relation to its articulation of the Satpanth. The Satpanth is expressed through the anticipated arrival and devotion to tenth avatar. I contend that this tenth avatar does not represent a figure of conversion, nor an example of syncretism, but rather, as an expression of messianic redemption for the Satpanth devotee.

Dasamo Avatār

In the opening lines of *Dasamo Avatār*, the protagonist of the poem, the tenth avatar, is described as a manifestation of Hari, a name referring either to Krishna or Vishnu. At this point in the text, he is "hidden" in an "Arab country".

Today, in the tenth vessel, Hari is the Nakalaki incarnation.
Today, he is sitting in the Arab country.
So, how many of the important deeds of Hari could one tell?
That deva remains hidden today in the Kali era.
So, in the Kali era, the guru Brahma is the incarnation of Pir Shams.
That guru wandered as a mendicant in twenty-four countries.[42]

Although the hero of the poem is introduced at this time, he remains hidden until, in Sachedina's terminology, it is the "proper time" for him to "strike." The introductory verses leading up to the moment of messianic arrival, focus on the imminence of that arrival as well as Satpanth teaching, both of which are explained by another figure, Pir Shams. Pir Shams assumes the guise of mendicant, and in his wanderings, arrives at the house of the evil demon Kalingo, the object of the tenth avatar's confrontation. Pir Shams comes to Kalingo's house in order to deliver a message about the tenth avatar to Kalingo's wife, Queen Suraja

Where Queen Suraja is sitting, at the very moment, assuming the form of a parrot, Pir Shams speaks. Listen, Queen Suraja, to the Atharva Veda, and the knowledge of Brahman. So that later you may attain a place in the eternal abode
Today, O Queen, you have come to the royal threshold of the house of the demon, but now your life is going to be wasted.
On hearing such words, the queen was amazed;
The queen went and touched the feet of Pir Shams, who was in the form of a parrot
Then Pir Shams spoke the truth.
Listen, Queen Suraja, to the tale of the Atharva Veda.
Queen, in the Krita era, the Rg Veda was current.
Then the devotee Prahlada attained liberation with five krores of beings
In that era Hari assumed four forms, the deva, the Shah himself destroyed four demons
Queen, know that in the second Treta era, the Yajur Veda was current
Then the deva rescued the devotee Harishchandra with seven krores of beings. In that era, the Shah himself destroyed three demons
Queen, know the third era, to be Dvapara, when the Sama Veda was the basis of authority.
The Pandavas were rescued with nine crores of beings. In that era, the deva, the Shah himself, destroyed two demons. Then King Yudhishthira achieved liberation with nine krores—they attained a place in the eternal abode.
Today, in the Kali era, the place of Hari is in the Atharva Veda.
So, today, in the Kali era, Hari is the tenth incarnation.
That deva, the lord Murari, has assumed the Nakalaki incarnation. He will kill your husband, Oh Lady.[43]

In its narration of the feats of "Hari" and the tenth avatar's forthcoming confrontation with Kalingo, *Dasavatār* is reminiscent of the *puranas*,

in which avatars perform heroic acts for the welfare of humankind.[44] In *Dasavatār*, however, the avatar's heroic acts are supplemented by a messenger, who facilitates devotion to the tenth avatar through a particular teaching. Although Pir Shams's message employs the language of the Vedas, Yugas, and the previous avatars of Hari, the purpose of his instruction is solely focused on conveying the authority of the Atharva Veda. The preceding Vedas, Yugas, and avatars are invoked only to provide the context for Nakalaki's destruction of Kalingo and to communicate the significance of a new teaching, what Shams also calls the Satpanth

Listen, Queen Suraja, to Pir Shams speaks his thought
Today in this era, understand the Satpanth as truth
So, Queen, without the Satpanth no one has attained knowledge
Therefore, O Queen, without the true guru there is no salvation.
Queen, in that era, worship the Satpanth as true
Then only, Queen Suraja, you will cross over safely
Queen, follow the Satpanth secretly, So that the demon may not know.[45]

After hearing Shams's Satpanth teaching, the Queen responds, having fully comprehended his message

Lord, whatever service was left undone by us in our previous life,
For that reason, we have truly come to the house of the demon.[46]
Lord, our birth was in that house
But now, due to the guide, the true guru, we have become eternal.[47]

In the previous passage, the reader is introduced to the particular language of Satpanth teaching, where Indic notions of time, the Yugas, and textual significance of the Vedas are deployed to convey a new Satpanth theology that both emerges from and displaces these older Indic ideas. In the above verses, we discover that Hindu ideas of rebirth *(karma)* and the desire for release from this world *(mukti)* are also central to Satpanth philosophy. Queen Suraja understands her station in life, as Kalingo's wife, through the philosophy of karma, she remarks that her actions in previous lives resulted in the present situation. More importantly, she realizes that escape from her condition, specifically, a desired state of immortality *(amara)*, has become possible as a result of her encounter with the guru, Pir Shams.

Shams also explains the importance of certain practices to the Satpanth, one of which is offering a tithe *(dassondh)*. Just before his departure, Shams gives Suraja precise instructions about the correct way to tithe, telling her to put the offering in a box and give it to a sea-traveler.[48] Another verse explains that the person who doesn't give sufficient *dassondh*, who doesn't perform good deeds *(sukarita)*, and who does not attend the house of prayer *(dharamasara)* because of laziness will be forced to wander in

exile.[39] In another section, the tithe is presented as a good deed performed regularly by the *munivar*, or saintly one, a deed that the guru commands subjects to emulate:

> Such happiness the sages will truly enjoy,
> Those who spend their time, day after day, giving tithe and doing meritorious deeds, as the guru decrees.[40]

Other *gināns* give ample warnings of consequences if one does not pay. The following poem attributed to Pir Shams not only underscores the importance of the practice but also points out the repercussions of neglecting to pay:

> The heart of the Guru, yes, his heart is filled with religion *(dharma)*
> In the True faith (din), indeed, in the true faith, he is born.
> Fair-complexioned, yes, well-disposed, the Guru held a cup before his face
> He placed his hand, indeed, he laid his hand on top of my head
> Give it to the Saheb, indeed, give! For the servant who gives not falls into [illegible] green
> If the tithe is incorrect, yes, if it falls short the mind will become defective
> Afterward do not wring your hands, indeed, do not get [illegible] with remorse
> Make ten portions, yes, divide into ten equal measures of weight
> Dare not be negligent, indeed, delinquent! Be wary, be conscientious
> Else it will turn into a heavy burden, yes a terrible affliction upon you
> Your life, indeed the whole of it will be worthless, it will be wasted
> The soul scorched and your body crushed, you will repent, yes bemoan
> Pir Shams said: If you want release, know your religion *(dharma)*, yes, realize it.[41]

This poem offers further explanation about the practice of tithing. In *Dasavatār*, the tithe is simply associated with a virtuous practice prescribed by the guru, but here, the recipient of the tithe is addressed as "Guru" or "Saheb"—thereby making it clear that the practice is necessarily directed to an object of devotion. This poem not only instructs the devotee to remember the tithe, warning of grave consequences for neglecting to do so, but also specifically defines the practice, telling the devotee to divide his worth into tens. The instructions of offering the tithe in this poem are exceedingly harsh, for the poem explains that forgetting the practice or not doing so properly will result in grave consequences. Moreover, this poem links the practice of tithing to Satpanth *dharma* and the promise of liberation from this world *(mukti)* by decreeing that failure to perform the offering results in a "scorched soul" and a "crushed body." The frequency and seriousness with which these texts mention one's duty to tithe demonstrates the centrality of the practice to Satpanth teaching.

While the first section of the *Dasamo Avatār* introduces Satpanth philosophies and practices through the dialogue with Queen Surata, the middle portion of the poem focuses on the figure of the tenth avatar, narrating his arrival and, then, his confrontation with Kalingo, the culminating event of the poem. The tenth avatar, most frequently referred to as the "Shah," functions as an "expected deliverer, who is to come and humble or destroy the forces of wickedness and establish the rule of justice and equity on earth."[42] In this section, the Shah arrives from secret location, which is very much in accordance with Shi'i *mahdī* theology.[43] As the Shah moves out of occultation, the poem switches to the future tense to describe the imminence of the tenth avatar's confrontation with the demon Kalingo and the eventual establishment of his rule. With this new mood of anticipation, the poem focuses not on the particulars of the confrontation but, rather, on the details of the preconfrontation, that is, the condition of the world prior to the establishment of the Shah's rule and the specifics of the Shah's journey from the hidden locale. The poem explains that the arrival of the tenth avatar and his encounter with Kalingo's army will take place in the Kaliyug, a time of immense physical and social upheaval: waters will dry up and food will run out, while women will abandon their children, Brahmins marry Sudras, and people will be generally fraudulent and deceitful.[44] Most importantly, believers will be controlled by the power of Kalingo:

> Then, the minds of the believers will turn away from the scriptures *(agamas)*.
> Then, the minds of the believers will be unsteady.
> Then, Kalingo will make the minds go astray.
> Brother, the guru says, you will perish in the end.[45]

The chaos of the Kaliyug, however, heralds the arrival of the Shah with his army:

> When all the signs are fulfilled, then know that the Shah is coming.
> Pir Imam Shah has spoken the truth, Brother, these are the last signs.[46]

In addition to portraying the upheavals of the Kaliyug, this section of *Dasamo Avatār* also provides a detailed description of the Shah himself. In the opening lines of the poem, the tenth avatar is residing in an "Arab desh"; here the poem reiterates that that Hari resides outside India, but locates his residence specifically in "Setadipa," or the Persian lands, where, according to the narrator, the "king sits and nobody knows."[47] Building upon the anticipation of the Shah's arrival, the poem then provides extensive details of his horse, clothes, and army: that the Shah's horse is decorated in gold, the belt of its reins is studded with rubies, and every hair on its mane is strung with jewels. In the midst of this description,

even the poet himself is amazed, interjecting, "There was so much gold, how could one describe it all?"[48]

The Shah wears a jewel-studded suit, and his slippers glitter with gold. A chain of diamonds and rubies hangs around his neck.[49] The Shah is not only presented as a regal and divine figure; the text gives equal weight to his role as warrior. When the Shah mounts his horse, "a shout arises in all the three worlds," and after a lengthy description of all the members of the Shah's army, the narrator explains how a horde of musicians assemble, beating drums and playing "eighteen crores of war horns."[50] This music signals that the time for the Shah's entrance into India has arrived. As the Shah and his army begin to enter India, they pass between the Meru and Himalaya mountains. Continuing in a hyperbolic descriptive mode, the poet conveys that the Shah's army is so vast that it cannot be contained between these ranges, and while the army marches, the droppings of its horses pile up to a height of one and a quarter yards high.[51]

This account sets the stage for the confrontation between the Shah and Kalingo, and the detailed description concludes with the moment of the Shah's arrival, when he sits on a decorated throne.[52] Only after the Shah situates himself on the throne, surrounded by various celestial beings, does the poem turn to Kalingo. Before the actual confrontation between Kalingo and the Shah, Queen Suraja and her son, Prince Kamala, tell Kalingo that he cannot fight the Shah. They delineate the various feats of the nine previous avatars of Hari, warning him that the tenth incarnation Nakalak is indestructible, and the queen tells Kalingo, "So, husband, why do you not take heed, you ignorant Kalingo?"[53] But Kalingo ignores their warning, and after this conversation, their armies confront each other; ultimately the Shah takes his sword and slays the demon's entire army.[54] The subsequent verses describe the new world ushered in by the Shah's victory

> Then all the gathered creation is recreated
> There, the Shah causes all the believers to rule
> Then my Shah will sit upon a large round cushion
> There, guru Muhammad will be the vizier.[55]

Just as the poem's description of the Kaliyug emphasizes the misery of the world prior to the Shah's arrival, the descriptions of the cosmos after the defeat of Kalingo present the reader with images of paradise created by the Shah's reign. The closing verses of the poem describe this paradise or eternal abode *(amarapuri)* as decorated with gold and jewels. This eternal abode will last for one and a quarter lakhs of years, during which time the Shah will marry. The poem explains that *amarapuri* is open only to Satpanthis and closes by stating that those who follow the customs of the

Dasavatār will be saved on the Day of Judgment *(mahadin)* and the cycle of death and rebirth *(samsara)*.[56]

In *Dasamo Avatār*, time is articulated in relation to the messianic and redemptive event of the Shah's rise from occultation, slaying of the demon Kalingo, and establishment of his rule. In this way, temporality is expressed primarily within a framework of Shi'i theology. Unlike the *Nabi Vamsha*, in which the Sunni conception of prophecy ends with the death of Muhammad, Shi'i theology allows for a prophetic continuity. In *Dasavatār*, the Shah comes to India, and imamate ideology is thus localized, concretized, and defined in the Indic space. Through notions of time as well as through the figure of the Shah himself, this Shi'i perspective creates a shift in the ideological epicenter, that is, from the Arab to the Indian context.

In the next section, I examine another set of poems attributed to Imam Shah, titled *Yog Vānī* ("Utterances on Yoga") and a different figure of Satpanth redemption described therein. This figure is a guru, who articulates Satpanth philosophy and practices through Nath Siddha discourse. I examine how in the *Yog Vānī*, Satpanth religiosity is defined by the invocation of specific ritual practices, the critique of asceticism, and, most importantly, the centrality of the guru. I then point to a specific connection between *Dasamo Avatār* and the *Yog Vānī*; like the Shah in *Dasamo Avatār*, the guru of the *Yog Vānī* establishes his throne and comes to represent the possibility of redemption for the Satpanth devotee.

Yog Vānī Gināns

Poem 1

> Ād thaki ek sun nīpāyā, tare sunmāthī sabad nīpāya—jugesar
> Jognā maram koi na jāne, jogkā maram jugesar jāne—jugesar
> Mundrā peherī ne man vash nāhī narge jāsho nīrvān—jugesar
> Bhabhut chole ne pāy patāve, pan sīdhnā shahd ne jāne—jugesar
> Sangī vagāde ne kān fatāve, pan bhīrmanā akhar na jāne—jugesar
> Jatā vadhāre ne yog na sādhe, pan mugatnā maram na jāne—jugesar
> Jampu dīp māhe sāmī takht rachāya, te shestnā sīrajanhār—jugesar.
> Adasath tīrtha te parvat ne nīr, tīyā nahī nīvedā thāy—jugesar
> Em bhane indra imām shāhā, tame suno māra jogī, gur maie to sesā tele—jugesar

Translation

> In the beginning, there was emptiness, and from emptiness the Word was created—Jugesar
> The meaning of yog no one knows, the meaning of yog, only Jugesar knows—Jugesar

He who wears an earring but has no control of his self, will indeed go to hell—Jugesar
He smears sacred ash and makes people touch his feet, but doesn't know the power of the word—Jugesar
He plays the horn and splits his ear, but doesn't know the divine Word—Jugesar
He wears his hair long and matted but doesn't know the secret to liberation—Jugesar
In India, the lord has established his throne, he the ultimate creator—Jugesar
At the sixty-eight pilgrimage sites of mountain and water, you won't achieve anything—Jugesar
Listen my yogi, says Indra Imam Shah, only if you meet the guru, will your problems go away—Jugesar

Poem 2

Gur paramānī tame jāno, tame shantokhe sudha thaoji
Satgurnī vāchā ne karnīe sācha, e sevāe mugat pāo,
Jugesar sesht gur vīnā, mugati nav hoeji
Manane māro ne vīkhyāne vāro, to jāso sarg bhijari
Jyā dharm parkāsh ne ghatjo thāpeā, tīyā kidha jivonā oodhar—jugesar
Ek abhadhut ek jotsu kheliya, ne kidha niveda jogna sārji.
Āsmān sarjine chandar nīpāyā, ane sarjea te varan adhār, jugesar
Pavan parkās ne pātāl bandhiyā, ane tran murat ek kīrtārji,
Tran murat chothā tatvane jano e nar narāyan ghar āvīgā sansār—jugesar
Dharma parkhi tame pāvāl pīyo, jena thāy ikoterna nistarji.
Evo satpanth tamne pāyā, narge jātāne vāre sār—jugesar
Ikoter purīyā tamārā āgal thāsho, evā bhīram gīnān suno sārji.
Kīdha karam parame thāsho, ane tale mahādan mār—jugesar
Munīvarne kāje amarāpurī sarjiyā, je karanī kamavasho sārji.
Āge gorak nāth machandar bhaniye, ten nathi tajya sansār—jugesar
Teonā udhār em gherthī thaya, evu jānone jog utāroji.
Sīdh purunī seva jo kīje, jivno kasnīe thāy nīstār—jugesar
Bhabhut cholī ne hath māhe joli, pan bhītrnā bhed na jānoji,
Bhane gur mamshāhā tame suno jugesar, tame dasmā āvatārne paramāno—jugesar
Nave avatāro kāi arath na thāe, jo satpanth dhīāvo vichārji
Āj dashme avatar kere jivane sandhe, tame seva karo nar ne nāri.

Translation

Certainly, if you know the guru, you will be endlessly satisfied.
If you understand the guru's words as truth and act accordingly, then you will reach salvation.
Without Jugesar guru, there will be no salvation.
Control your passions and sacrifice fame, then you will go to heaven.
Where dharma is illuminated and the ghat is established, there, beings are liberated—Jugesar
Producing the wind and fastening the earth together, this one creator created three forms—Jugesar.

Know the essence of the fourth after these three forms—that Nar Narayan's home has arrived in the cycle of death and rebirth—Jugesar
With attention to dharma, drink the consecrated water, and you will achieve seventy-one generations of enlightenment
If you met with the Satpanth as such, then heading to hell, you will turn around—Jugesar
With the seventy-one generations of enlightenment, you will get ahead, and likewise, listen to the ginans.
Your bad karma will be removed, and you will avert the beating of punishment
For the true believers Lord has made the place of paradise. He who acts truly well earns it
Gorakhnath Machandar progressed, and he didn't relinquish the world—Jugesar
He achieved liberation from this world—know this and incorporate yog into your life
If you do the service of one who is righteous, you will have no more worldly attachments—jugesar
One who applies sacred ash and carries the begging bowl, he doesn't know the secret inner meaning—Jugesar
Guru Imamshah says [illegible] Jugesar give [illegible] testimony to the tenth avatar
The nine avatars are meaningless if you haven't meditated on the Satpanth
In this time of the tenth avatar, pull yourself together and perform proper service, men and women

In the *Yog Vāni* poems, asceticism provides the springboard from which Satpanth teaching and practice are articulated. Although the *Yog Vāni* poems can be understood generally as a kind of critique of asceticism, the specific modality of the poems' critiques illustrates that the poems, in fact, reconfigure the language and philosophy associated with ascetic traditions, particularly that of the Nath Siddhas, to convey Satpanth teaching and practice. According to David White, the Nath Siddhas themselves emerged as a "heterodox" tradition in medieval India, and their language and practices worked to "subvert the canons of Vedic and 'high tantric' religion"

"Yogi" or "jogi" has, for at least eight hundred years, been an all-purpose term employed to designate those Saiva religious specialists whom orthodox Hindus have considered suspect, heterodox, and even heretical in their doctrine and practice. On the one hand, the Yogis are defined (like tantrikas of an earlier time) by their nonconformity to and exclusion form orthodox categories: they are that troubling aggregate of sectarian groups and individuals whose language and behavior subvert the canons of Vedic, devotional, and "high" tantric religion. On the other, hand, they are defined by certain features of their sectarian affiliations and practices: heirs to the heterodox Pasupatas and Kapalikas of an earlier age, they are devotees of terrible forms of Siva (Bhairava) who besmear themselves with ashes, leave their hair uncut, and continue to adhere to the practices of "primitive" tantrism. In recent

times, "yogi" has been most specifically applied to the Nath Siddhas, who are widely known as Kanphata (Split-eared, for the very visible earrings they wear in holes bored through the thick of their ears, the hallmark of the order) Yogis or Jogis.[58]

As the opening lines of the first poem convey, "Jugesar" is the only one who understands the meaning of "yog." In contrast to this "true yogi," his opposite, the false yogi, acts like a traditional Nath Siddha ascetic: he "smears sacred ash," "wears his hair long and matted," and "splits his ear." The critique of asceticism in this poem, therefore, is articulated through an opposition between the "true" and "false" yogi. According to the poet, this false yogi engages in practices and adopts guises that make him seem knowledgeable but that are actually ineffective for understanding the meaning of yog. He cannot comprehend the "divine word," and is even bound to hell *(narg)* because of his actions.[59] The poem sets these two types of engagement with the world in opposition by depicting a dichotomy between internal and external practice. The impostor yogi focuses only on the external world, not only focusing on his appearance, but also seeking out others to indulge him as well: for example, expecting others to touch his feet. This kind of prioritization of external physicality, the narrator explains, is ultimately self-destructive and futile. Wearing long-hair matted locks but having no control of one's mind *(man)* does not lead to understanding the meaning *(maram)* of liberation *(mugati)*; similarly, visits to pilgrimage sites lead the devotee nowhere meaningful.[60]

This dichotomy between the internal and external provides both philosophical speculation and as well practical guidance. The explanatory mode of the poem serves to convey the philosophy of the Satpanth, which dictates that one should strive to understand the relationship of the sacred utterance to the cosmos and to the guru. However, although the poem emphasizes the importance of understanding of the meaning of yog, the mystery of creation, and the secret to liberation, it always prefaces this lesson by enumerating various actions one ought not to take. By outlining the numerous missteps of the false yogi, the poem tells the recipient/audience what participation in the Satpanth entails. The contrast between the false yogi and Jugesar warns the potential devotee against emulating the false yogi. Thus, the oppositional framework that draws a distinction between Jugesar and the impostor serves to bring the devotee into the Satpanth understanding of community, which, in this poem, is delineated through a call to avoid the wrong set of practices.

While the poem's critiques of ascetic practice form one important facet of the teaching, they provide, at the same time, an opportunity to

offer a discussion about the centrality of the guru to Satpanth teaching. The greatness of the guru is first acknowledged in the poem through the description of Jugesar. As the opening verse explains, the universe begins with "the Word"—the sacred utterance *(sabda/akhara)* whose mysterious meaning *(maram)* only Jugesar has insight into. As discussed above, the connection between meeting the guru, Jugesar, and understanding the mystery of creation [illegible] by the polemic in which the false yogi's notions of practice are [illegible] of the true yogi. The opposition between the misguided practitioner and Jugesar suggests to the reader, at first, that there is an essential and unbridgeable divide between the two. The name "Jugesar," however, appears in every verse. Although the reiteration of Jugesar at the end of each stanza might simply serve as a metric filler [illegible] of the name, especially coming after each verse [illegible] practices, refers the reader back to the opening line, which proclaims that Jugesar alone possesses understanding of yog. The [illegible] poem [illegible] consciously distinguish between the true and false yogi, and the repetition of "Jugesar" at the end of each verse serves [illegible] the opposition between the ineffective actions of the practitioner and the divine knowledge that Jugesar possesses. This recurrence of Jugesar's name at the end of each verse, in fact, sets the stage for the closing lines of the poem: "Listen my yogi, if you meet your guru, your problems will be resolved." The shift from the explanatory to the conditional mood in this final stanza reminds the devotee of the redemptive power of the guru. It conveys to the readers that the division between the false yogi and true yogi is not irreconcilable. Up to this point, the misguided yogi has performed a series of futile actions, but the poem offers a way for the false yogi to escape his misguided path, by encountering the true guru, he can remedy these "problems."

The centrality of the guru and the importance of understanding the parameters of Satpanth practice also form the basis of the second *Yog Vāṇī* poem. In this second poem, the encounter with the guru makes understanding of Satpanth teachings possible, as the poem states that salvation requires understanding the guru's words and acting accordingly.[61] This second poem, in particular, articulates the tension between life affirmation and life negation. For example, the poem reads, "If you do the service of one who is righteous, you will have no more worldly attachments."[62] Furthermore, in the fourth verse, it states, "Control your passions and sacrifice fame, then you will go to heaven." While these statements appear to encourage detachment and renunciation, other verses declare that participation in the world, particularly the practice of specific rituals, is equally important. The insistence on proper conduct

and practice is outlined not only in terms of negation—as the first poem did, by concentrating almost exclusively on the practices and rituals the yogi should avoid—but also through specific injunctions. For example, it states, "With attention to dharma, drink the consecrated water, and you will achieve seventy-one generations of enlightenment. If you met with the Satpanth as such, then heading to hell, you will turn around." The drinking of the *pāval*, or consecrated water, is described as a practice that is tied to personal duty that has the power to reverse one's fate.

This particular ritual is part of the Satpanth *ghat pat* ceremony, in which all members of the community share in the consecrated water. In her article "Conversation between Guru Hasan Kabiruddin and Jog. Kanipha. Tantra Revisited by the Ismaili Preachers," Dominique Sila Khan explains that this ceremony, along with other components of Satpanth practice, are reformulations of tantric ritual. She outlines the following elements of Satpanth ritual that "recall the Vammargi ceremonies":

> Secrecy: those who had not been initiated into the Satpanth were not allowed to attend their ceremonies.
> Joint participation of men, women, and children.
> Caste mixing: all communities, including untouchables, commune in the assembly hall.
> Communal drinking of consecrated water which, as Ivanow has observed, is intended to replace the semen partaken of in Sakta or left-handed tantric rituals.
> The pot itself in which the water is kept is traditionally worshiped by Hindus as the Goddess, of whom it is a symbol.[54]

Whether or not Satpanth rituals such as the *ghat pāt* were influenced by tantric rites, it is apparent that ritual drinking is not an empty act divested of meaning—as is the case with the person "who applies sacred ash and carries the begging bowl." The ritual's significance is connected to a narrative of cosmological ordering, as can be seen in the following *ginān* attributed to Pir Shams:

> The Lord will marry the Virgin Earth, it is the marriage of the Lord of the three worlds. On that day, the ritual of the *ghat* will be set up, and the deceitful will not come near.
> O reflecting one, be aware that in the world we have an abode, recognize our two disciples, Vimras and Surbhan.[55]
> Though called disciples, they have been with us in all the *yugas*, in the Kali *yuga*, they will surely appear together, know this.
> We will come to dwell where the *ghat* ceremony takes place, with incense and lamps making fragrance and much brightness.

> In the Kali *yuga*, there is much worship of holy water, of the vessel for nectar and its fragrance, but only where our disciples become manifest, will the full ceremony be established.
> When the disciples establish the *ghat* for devotion, Pir Shams says, they will dwell in heavenly abode.[56]

In this *ginān* of Pir Shams, events that appear in *Dasamo Avatār*, namely the Shah's marriage, are connected to the Satpanth ritual mentioned in the second *Yog Vāṇī* poem, the *ghat pāt* ceremony. As the narrator explains, after the Shah's marriage, all devotees will gather together as never before to participate in the *ghat pāt* ritual together. According to the poem, the worship of holy water has occurred previously and the vessel has been used before, but the sacred ritual has not yet embodied its complete significance. The ritual of the *ghat pāt* is infused with new meaning when it is performed as a community of devotees, at the time of the Shah's marriage. Here again, as in *Dasamo Avatār*, performing the appropriate ritual action in tandem with devotion to the Shah guarantees a place for the devotee in the "eternal abode."

The importance of ritual is one subject in the second *Yog Vāṇī* poem; a critique of those who practice renunciation is another. This type of critique can be traced to the Nath Siddhas, who differentiated themselves from traditions of renunciation associated with high tantrism, Upanishadic Hinduism, and Buddhism. The first poem only alludes to the Satpanth's rejection of renunciation, but the second poem makes clear that active participation in the world leads to liberation. The narrator explains that practices such as carrying a begging bowl and smearing ashes are not important: just as the first poem stressed the significance of the *maram of yog*, devotees are here instructed to give primacy to understanding *bhitr bhed*, the esoteric meaning of the universe.[55] The yogi of this *ginān* is called upon to actively participate in the world. For example, the poem recounts the case of one paradigmatic devotee, whose liberation was attained as a result of worldly engagement: "Gorakanath Machander didn't relinquish the world. He achieved liberation from this world."[57] In other words, he did not achieve salvation from relinquishing *sansār*, the cycle of death and rebirth, for his *oodhār*, or liberation, came from participation in the everyday. After this example, the poem commands the reader/listener, "Know this, and bring *yog* into your life."

The second poem thus also declares that it is never too late to incorporate the Satpanth into one's life. The closing lines of the poem convey this point, but this time through the language of avatars:

> Guru Imamshah says, listen Jugesar, give testimony to the tenth avatar
> The nine avatars are meaningless if you haven't meditated on the Satpanth
> In this time of the tenth avatar, pull yourself together and perform proper service, men and women

The verses prior to the above lines repeat ideas and themes from the first poem—a narrative of cosmic creation, the importance of the guru, and a warning to avoid adopting the practices of a false yogi. In a move also reminiscent of the first poem, the tone of these final verses shifts from explanatory to imperative, as the narrator explains to the devotee that it is still possible to join the Satpanth, regardless of his/her past. In the first poem, Jugesar is the true yogi, the cosmic creator, and the guru whom the devotee must encounter; here "Jugesar" refers to the yogi or potential devotee who is called upon to understand the importance of the tenth avatar. Although this verse emphasizes the same idea of possibility to join the Satpanth offered in the first poem, this second poem uses the division of time between the first nine avatars and the tenth as a means to convey a similar message of opportunity. The narrator makes it clear that even if one did not participate in or understand the Satpanth during the time of the first nine avatars, there remains the opportunity to adopt Satpanth practices within the time that lies ahead, the time of the tenth avatar.

The closing statements in both poems, which directly address the devotee, illustrate that the message of the Satpanth offers a kind of redemption. The second poem's point about the time of the tenth avatar is a direct reformulation of the redemptive power of the guru articulated in the first poem. The closing lines of the first poem present the encounter with the guru as a transformative event which allows the potential devotee to change his/her course in life, even if that life had been filled with a series of mistaken choices. Paralleling this conclusion, the second poem explains that the time of the tenth avatar provides an opportunity for the potential devotee to reflect on his/her life, recognize the possibility of change, and perform the right kind of service. Even if the reader/listener has engaged in a series of mistaken actions or believes that the path to liberation lies in asceticism, the Satpanth offers the possibility of starting anew by discarding these practices and beliefs.

The figure of redemption in the *Yog Vānī* poems is not only expressed through the discourse of the guru. Interestingly, the motif of the "throne," that represented the Shah's rule in *Dasamo Avatār*, appears in the first *Yog Vānī* poem as well. While the majority of the poem discusses the opposition between the true and false yogi, the reader encounters a seemingly unrelated verse placed in the middle of the poem. Verse seven proclaims: "In India, the lord has established his throne, he is the ultimate creator."[64]

This is the only verse in the poem that does not center on conducting oneself properly and cultivating understanding of oneself as part of a larger mysterious creation. In addition, the verse switches from the divine appellation "Jugesar" [illegible] meaning "lord." This shift is not dramatic in and of itself, but as a whole [illegible] sudden [illegible] about the "Sami" arriving from [illegible] land and establishing his kingdom in "jambu dip" [illegible] practices. By changing the subject from [illegible] to the "Sami" who establishes his "takht" or throne in "jampudip," the narrator presents a different manifestation of the [illegible] remands the reader of the tenth avatar and the [illegible] *Dasamo Avatar*. The figure of the "Sami" here will establish his throne in India, just as the tenth avatar in *Dasamo Avatar* did.

Dasamo Avatar explains that after the Shah sets up his throne, he will marry the Virgin Earth. In the Pir Shams *ginān*, the *ghat pat* ceremony that follows the Shah's marriage will take place on a far greater scale than it ever has before, where all disciples of the Satpanth will achieve the heavenly abode. The events associated with the Shah's establishment of his throne come to represent the fulfillment of messianic expectation, in which the community will participate in Satpanth teaching and justice will be established. When this occasion takes place at the end of the Kaliyug—marked by the marriage of the Shah to the Virgin and the sharing in the *ghat pat* by all disciples—all participants will be considered equals. While "Vasva Kumari" is one name of the Virgin Earth, the bride of this marriage, in some *gināns*, it is sometimes referred to as "Megri," a possible reference to the dalit meghaval community.[70] This subject of caste is not discussed in *Dasamo Avatār* at any great length; however, it is the central topic of discussion in the ninth story, *Buddhavatār*. This next section continues to explore the themes of justice and redemption in a reading of the *ginān Buddhavatār*, which is attributed to Pir Sadrudin. Many of the same themes from the previous poems recur in *Buddhavatār*: the imparting of a new teaching that relies on older Indic ideas, the possibility to embrace the Satpanth message despite one's previous allegiances, and, most significantly, the importance of belief in Hari avatār, the cycle of incarnations.

Buddhavatār

In the traditional ordering of avatars of Vishnu, the Buddha generally appears as the ninth incarnation. When the Buddha is acknowledged in the avatar sequence, he most often serves as a model of compassion and

righteous conduct, following the more conventional trans of his fellow avatars. However, unlike the preceding eight avatars or the subsequent tenth, the Buddha's appearance is inconsistent: he is sometimes excluded from the series altogether.[71] The portrayal of the Buddha also differs from the traditional representation of other avatars: whereas most avatars are depicted as munificent beings helping to lead humanity towards divinity, the Buddha is, in some instances, described as leading humankind astray with false teachings.[72]

The *ginān Buddhavatār* presents another unique version of the Buddha.[73] The Buddha emerges in an altogether new avatar guise, proclaiming a new message. In the poem *Buddhavatār*, "Shribuddha," Buddha's title in the poem, is introduced as the manifestation of Hari. However there is little correspondence between the description of Shribuddha and any other account of the Buddha.[74] While Shribuddha does convey some semblance of traditional Buddhist philosophies—preaching compassion, promoting dharma, and rejecting Brahmanical social orders—the overriding message of *Buddhavatār* is wholly unique in its espousal of proper conduct and supersessive theology.

Buddhavatār's teaching is quite expansive, oscillating between the prosaic prescriptive and proscriptive codes of behavior and the meditative—a series of ruminations on the nature of the divine. The culminating and most dramatic moment, however, occurs when Shribuddha converts the protagonists of the poem, the Pandavas, to his philosophy. This discussion analyzes the exchange between one of the Pandavas, Bhim, and Shribuddha, and the culminating moments of the Pandavas' conversion, as recounted by another Pandava brother, Jujesthan. More specifically, I explore how the figures of Bhim and Jujesthan are inflected and positioned in dialogue with Shribuddha. The literary device of dialogue and, in particular, the point of view that the Pandava protagonists express in the poem function to elucidate the significant motifs of the poem: the progressive degeneration of knowledge about the divine (represented in the poem by the Brahmins), the propagation of Shribuddha's new revelation, and the possibility of salvation that the Pandavas epitomize.

The poem opens with the arrival of Shribuddha at the house of the Pandavas, at which point Shribuddha's appearance, which is simultaneously disgusting and compelling, attracts immediate interest. The narrator describes his ugly face and deformed legs,[75] and details his bodily odor, which is so offensive that nobody can bear to stand near him.[76] On the one hand, he is physically repulsive to the senses, but at the same time,

the poet describes his avatar guise as one of a "mughī roop": Shribuddha is also dressed as a warrior, holding a knife, dagger, sword, and bow and arrow.[77] The unsightly aspects of this appearance brand him with the appellation of a low-caste person (*chandāl*); his mughal warrior accoutrements elicit royal titles, such as *diwan* and *mīr*. As if the paradoxical depiction of low-caste royalty were not complex enough, the final strokes on the already vibrant image illuminate who this Shribuddha really is: Jādoray, the "King of the Yadavas," who has manifested himself to restore order on earth. The last verse of the section highlights this incongruity of form and essence by noting that "it was in *this* [emphasis mine] form that Jādoray arrived at the door of the Pandavas."[78]

Shribuddha arrives at a moment within the poem that holds cosmic significance. *Buddhavatār* takes place at the juncture between the Duapurjug and Kaljug,[79] after the completion of the battle in the *Mahabharata*, which brings the Duapurjug to an end.[80] The postbattle setting into which Shribuddha enters in *Buddhavatār* can therefore be understood as a kind of continuation of the narrative of the *Mahabharata*. Shribuddha emerges upon a scene in which two separate collectives, introduced at this point and referred throughout the poem as "the Pandavas" and "the Brahmins," are performing religious rituals. The five Pandava brothers are conducting the Vedic fire ceremony (*hom jagan*), and next to them Brahmins are reciting the Vedas. While reciting the Vedas and conducting the fire ceremony both represent misguided practices, only the Brahmins are presented as irredeemable and beyond the reach of Shribuddha's message.

The Brahmins are positioned as permanently misguided practitioners; they serve as persistent targets of the narrator's polemic. The Pandavas, on the other hand, are conflicted devotees, whose responses to the Brahmins' authority shift throughout the poem. In the first section of the text, the Pandavas are in conversation with the Brahmins, trying to understand what the proper penance for having killed the Kauravas ought to be. Initially, the Pandavas steadfastly obey the Brahmins' authority, but as the poem unfolds, they become the central protagonists who struggle to resist the Brahmins' power. The entrance of Shribuddha into this setting of Vedic ritual and recitation is therefore a significant juxtaposition, reflecting the central message of the poem as a whole: Shribuddha, representing the culminating and final revelation, breaks into the performance of the *hom jagan* ceremony in order to save the Pandavas from progressively degenerating Brahmanical traditions.

Prior to Shribuddha's conversations with Bhim and Jujesthan, the Pandavas obey the Brahmins' guidance and authority, as evidenced by

their preparations for the *hom jagan* ceremony. After the description of Shribuddha's arrival, the poem turns to King Jujesthan,[82] the conflicted and tortured ruler who is unable to overcome the pain of having fought a war with the Kauravas. Jujesthan tells the Brahmins, "The sin of killing 3,240,000 Kauravas rests on me."[83] He follows this lament with an appeal to Brahmanical authority, asking, "What is the punishment for having committed this sin?"[84] Instead of invoking any kind of philosophical discourse on the impermanence of the body or significance of Kshatriya duty, the Brahmins instead tell him to invite one thousand Brahmins to dinner, and "in this way, this sin will be forgiven."[85]

The figure of Jujesthan embodies the tensions the Pandavas, as a group, face. Jujesthan does not simply accept the Pandavas' defeat of the Kauravas as a victory. His despair compels the reader to empathize and engage with him, to explore the nature of the character's conflict, and to, in turn, sympathize with his desperation and consequent decision to listen to the Brahmins. Nevertheless, the tone of the narrative shifts quickly, and after commiserating with Jujesthan, the text returns to an indictment of the Pandavas; at this point, the narrator explains, "Taking the Brahmins' advice, the Pandavas were led astray and they celebrated the *hom jagan*."[86]

This particular representation of Brahmans—as preoccupied with customs related to food and fixated on the recitation of the Vedas—is a trope in many bhakti poems. In *Patterns in North Indian Hagiography*, W. L. Smith writes about how poets such as Kabir, Eknath, and Ravidas critique the behavior and actions of Brahmins in this way. One account in the *Ravidas Ramayana* describes an incident in which the queen of Chittor, Yogavati, arranged for a celebratory dinner after encountering Ravidas. Smith writes: "To celebrate her finding a guru, a great festival was arranged and rishis were invited from all quarters to come and get darsan of Raidas. After the ceremony had been performed to the sound of the Vedas, Raidas was given a seat of honor and this aroused the ire of all the Brahmans present. Food was served and everyone sat down in rows to eat. The arrangement displeased the Brahmans, who complained that they would be polluted if they eat in the presence of an untouchable and announced that they would rather go home than eat together with him. Suddenly each Brahman found a duplicate of Raidas sitting on each side of him. They then hung their heads, overcome with shame."[87]

While both Raidas and Shribuddha confront Brahmanic hegemony, the Raidas story portrays an immediate sympathetic reaction to Brahmanic hubris, as multiple Raidases "magically" appear to undermine Brahmanic authority. In the confrontation between Shribuddha and Bhim,

however, Shribuddha must work to convey the inefficacy and misguidedness of Brahmanical values to Bhim; the Pandavas do not instantaneously accept his message upon his arrival at their house. *Buddhavatār* presents Shribuddha's delivery of his message as a dialogue between him and Bhim and Jujesthan, in which his message is conveyed and understood only after initial resistance.

Prior to Shribuddha's arrival, the Brahmins are aware of the approaching *chandāl* visitor, who will soon arrive, cause trouble, and oppose the *hom jagan*.[88] As a preventive measure, Bhim is chosen to protect the house of the Pandavas and is thus placed as a guard at the Pandavas' door. Shribuddha arrives hungry, but Bhim prevents him from receiving food. As predicted by the Brahmins, Shribuddha begins to argue with Bhim, but Bhim, abiding by necessary Brahmanic rules, prevents the *chandal* visitor from entering because a *chandāl* presence would pollute the gathering.

> Jāduray had taken such a repulsive form that one could not look him straight in his face
> Shribuddha said, 'Listen Bhim, let me get in
> I am starving. This is how I have arrived to the door of King Jujesthan
> Allow me to get food and see the *hom jagan* ceremony
> 'Listen, chandāl,' says Bhim, 'it is forbidden to enter
> The place where Jujesthan is performing the hom jagan, the Brahmins are reciting the Vedas
> Where this is happening, no one wants to see your low-caste face (*chandāl mukh*).
> The Brahmins are reading our Vedas, and your ugly form will cause harm."[89]

Bhim has clearly insulted Shribuddha, but instead of replying harshly, Shribuddha begins to explicate the word *chandāl*, entering into a dialogue with Bhim. Shribuddha starts by defining what he believes to be *chandāl*.

> Listen, Bhim, let me tell you about what is chandāl.
> Divine essence has left the Brahmins
> And has taken the form of Prophet Muhammad.
> Those who pretend to understand the Vedas,
> Those ones are chandāl
> The Brahmins recite the meaningless Vedas
> They have no knowledge of Hari avatara
> Those who do not know the fourth Veda
> Those ones are chandāl, O Bhim."[90]
> Of the present avatar, the Brahmins have no knowledge
> They speak lies out of their own self-interest.
> They have no awareness of liberation of the soul
> The Brahmins have knowledge of the three Vedas

Of the fourth, they have no knowledge
Those who have no knowledge about the fourth Veda
Those ones are chandāl.
During the Duapuriug, three Vedas have gone away and eight avatars of
Hari have been completed.
Today, I have come as the ninth avatar
The chandāl Brahmins are greatly ignorant
And they trample on the name of Buddhavatār

In the Raidas narrative, third-person narration describes the resolution of the conflict when the appearance of multiple Raidases confirms the righteousness of the anti-Brahmin viewpoint. Here, Shribuddha speaks in the first person, for he must *convince* Bhim of his position through his speech,[84] thus emphasizing the divine authority of his statements. In his exposition of "chandāl," Shribuddha first states that the divine essence, or "brahma," of the Brahmins has left and has taken the form of "nabi Muhammad." By claiming that divine essence has transferred to "nabi Muhammad," Shribuddha argues for a new religious theology that synthesizes both Shi'i ideas of prophetic renewal with cyclical conceptions of Hari avatara, or the Vaishnava divine descents. He explains to Bhim that the Brahmins not only engage in futile rituals, but they have no understanding of the most significant aspect of Shribuddha's teaching, Hari avatara. Furthermore, Shribuddha claims "three Vedas have gone away and eight avatars of Hari have been completed"; now, at the moment the poem takes place, between the Duapuryug and Kalijug, the fourth Veda, a new kind of teaching, has emerged. With the arrival of this final Veda Brahminic rituals are deemed finite and replaced by the authority of Shribuddha as the ninth avatar in the cycle of Hari avatara.

In *Avatar and Incarnation*, Geoffrey Parrinder traces the concept of "avatar" through a study of Vishnu's descents as described in the *Mahabharata*, the *Bhagavad Gita*, the commentarial tradition of Ramanuja, and the *puranas*. In the section "Twelve Characteristics of Avatar Doctrine," Parrinder points out that the avatar is a guarantee of divine revelation, whose goal is to bestow revelations of God to humans. He further details the specific ways in which the avatar conducts himself, noting that the avatar often performs two simultaneous roles when interacting with humans: as both "divine teaching" and "self-manifestation of the divine to human persons."[85]

By telling Bhim that he has arrived as the ninth manifestation of Hari, Shribuddha is offering Bhim both "the self-manifestation of the divine" and the new "divine teaching" he explained through the discussion of *chandāl*. Bhim's initial impulse is to dismiss Shribuddha, both because

of Shribuddha's appearance and because of his adherence to the Brahmins' command to guard the entrance. However, after Shribuddha delivers his comments about Brahmins and their lack of knowledge, Bhim is drawn into the revelatory experience and realizes that Shribuddha is more than what he appears to be. Bhim discovers that the avatar is not a repulsive person, but a wise man, whose words are divinely sanctioned. According to Bhim, Shribuddha's words come from *vaikunth*, Vishnu's abode.[86] The fact that Bhim realizes that Shribuddha's utterances possess divine authority demonstrates Bhim's new knowledge about Shribuddha's nature. Bhim now comprehends the nature of divine descent and recognizes that Shribuddha is the present avatar of Hari.

Even after Bhim remarks that Shribuddha's words come from *vaikunth*, he continues to engage in the dialogue, trying to fully understand the meaning of *chandāl*. He wants to know who from the *kshatri jāt* are *chandal*, who from the *jat* of men, who from the *jat* of women, and finally, who is considered the most *chandāl* of all.[87] In response, Shribuddha provides a list of actions that are acceptable and unacceptable, along with explanations about *chandāl* acts that allow him to comment on a range of behavior.[88] As a result of this discussion, Bhim learns which practices and beliefs are allowed and which are prohibited by the new teaching. After Shribuddha completes his full exposition on the nature of *chandāl*, Bhim fully accepts Shribuddha as an avatar, concluding, "He is Lord of the Three Worlds."[89]

After having internalized Shribuddha's message, Bhim is anxious to share what has been revealed to him, so he immediately conveys the news about the visitor to Jujesthan. Bhim tells Jujesthan that Shribuddha imparts wisdom about the reign of the Atharva Veda, that his words come from *vaikunth*, and most importantly, that whom the Brahmins call *chandāl* is really the merciful *Buddhavatār*.[90] After listening to Bhim, hearing about the divine nature of this visitor from Bhim, Jujesthan turns to his brother Sohodev,[91] asking him to explain the meaning of this divine manifestation. Sohodev tells Jujesthan that Krishna has taken the form of the Buddha and insists that Jujesthan ought to do what Shribuddha commands (and will regret failing to do so). Sohodev echoes what Shribuddha has already proclaimed, namely that the Brahmins have gone astray, that they greedily read the meaningless Vedas, and that they reject the concept of Hari avatara.[92]

The Brahmins then unsuccessfully try to convince Jujesthan and his brothers to avoid the low-caste visitor, but the Pandavas instead take Sohodev's advice and go to meet the guest. They do not, however, completely dismiss the Brahmins' counsel; the Pandavas follow a Brahmin

practice and sprinkle the ground with holy water from the Ganges before meeting Shribuddha. When the five brothers first encounter Shribuddha, he immediately asks them, "Why did you listen to the Brahmins? Why create doubt in your heart?"[101] Although he initially scorns their behavior, he at once offers forgiveness, on the condition that they submit with pure hearts.[102] He then states, "If you have my *didār* (divine vision), you will reap the benefit of infinite sacrifices."[103] After this moment, the Pandavas realize that the Brahmins had led them astray by forcing them to perform the Vedic sacrifice, and that Shribuddha has always been compassionate to the house of the Pandavas.[104]

As an avatar, Shribuddha assumed a human form to engage with humans and to deliver his message. He chose the Pandavas as his recipients and potential devotees. Unlike the Brahmins, who are depicted as a group lacking any individual opinions throughout, the Pandava characters, particularly Jujesthan and Bhim, are presented as individuals with distinct voices. The individuality of the Pandavas' voices in the poem demonstrates their "humanness" to the reader and thus provokes sympathy. Shribuddha, too, is humanized; as an avatar, he assumes a persona that grounds him in the worldly realm. Through the dialogue, Bhim's and Jujesthan's conflicts and questions become amplified, and Shribuddha's responses convey the contours of Satpanth teaching. The dialogue device, along with Shribuddha's avatar form, ultimately draws not only the protagonists but also the reader into the conversation. In turn, the experience of conversation becomes one of revelation—of Shribuddha's teachings and his divinity.

Conclusion

In the judgment of 1866, Justice Arnould proclaimed that the Aga Khan was the rightful owner of Khoja property, and Arnould used the fact that the Aga Khan had received payments made to titles such as "Sirkar Saheb" and "pir" from Khoja community members as evidence to support his decision. I have argued that the validation of the Aga Khan's authority as imam and the tradition of payments made to him ought to be considered in relation to practices and beliefs of the Satpanth—the uniquely Indo-Islamicate articulation of the "correct path" in which End Time is negotiated through figures of intercession (whether in the form of imam, guru, or avatar). The Shah of *Dasamo Avatār*, the guru Jugesar of the *Yog Vāni* poems, and Shribuddha of *Buddhavatār* all represent

some expression or variation of messianic authority, and in each case, acknowledging the divine figure in question ensures a form of salvation for the devotee.[105] As the *Yog Vāni* poems convey, even if one has been following the wrong path and engaging in sinful behavior, encountering the guru offers the promise of redemption. This position is echoed in *Dasamo Avatar*, where Pir Shams explains to the queen that she can be saved from her role as Kalingo's wife (a role she had been given because of previous karma) by renouncing her husband and devoting herself to the Shah. And in *Buddhavatar*, the Pandavas' conversation with and subsequent divine vision of Shribuddha allow them to accept Shribuddha as the ninth manifestation.

In all three poems, the imam/guru/avatar explains the importance of proper practice. In the *Yog Vani* poems, the duty to perform specific rituals such as the *ghat pat* is directly sanctioned by the guru's authority. Similarly, in *Dasamo Avatar*, paying the tithe is presented as a decree of the guru. The poem of Pir Shams describes the details of the practice, the repercussions for failing to pay the tithe, and, specifically, the recipients of the tithe as "guru" and "Saheb." The importance of paying the tithe is also reinforced in *Buddhavatar*. Shribuddha lists a series of actions that are considered *bandā*, one of which is neglecting to pay the tithe.

Arnould's definition of "sect," however, was procrustean, and his subsequent reading of *Dasavatar* identified the *ginans* as an expression of Persian Islam. He drew a division between the first nine chapters of *Dasavatar* and the tenth chapter, claiming that the first nine are Hindu and the final is Muslim, specifically Shi'i Ismā'īlī. The perspective of the imam/guru/avatar figure calls this division into question. The story of the ninth and tenth avatars as well as the *Yog Vani* poems relate the same central opposition between the correct path, the Satpanth, and the wrong path. In *Dasamo Avatār*, the Queen and her son are the paradigmatic devotees who, at the beginning of the poem, are devoted to Kalingo but then, upon the revelation of the Satpanth, convert to belief in the Shah as the last in the cycle of Hari avatara. In *Buddhavatār*, the opposition between right and wrong is represented between the Shribuddha's message and the ritual authority of Brahmins. The Pandavas, like the queen and her son, convert to the same message they left in the incarnation as part of the cycle of Hari avatar. The *Yog Vāni* poems too establish the opposition between the correct and incorrect path. The correct path is expressed primarily through the true and false yogi, but the *Yog Vāni* poems address the avatar sequence as well. The period between the first nine avatars and the tenth is presented as a window of opportunity for the devotee to join

the Satpanth. A theological distinction between the ninth and the tenth avatars is therefore nonexistent; the ninth and tenth avatars rely upon and connect to each other narratively, thematically, and symbolically—making it evident that Arnould authorized an artificial divison that effectively forced *Dasavatār* and the *gināns* into a frame of reference alien to the cultural and ritual milieu from which these poems were composed.

CHAPTER FOUR

Comparative Formations of the Hindu Swami Narayan "Sect"

> The sacred promise given by the Almighty Lord Shree Krishna was fulfilled, when time demanded, by coming into this world of a similar incarnation, during the latter half of the eighteenth century. India was disturbed to the utmost by wild unruly tribes. Crimes of the most fiendish nature were being committed by thugs and robbers. India was divided among several petty Rajas who were at variance with one another and were disturbing the peace, prosperity, and happiness of the general mass of the population of India. The whole atmosphere was thus filled with crime and immorality and consequently sages of the time expected the interference of some divine authority. [illegible] work out the salvation of India under these hard circumstances and offered prayer to the Almighty [illegible] response to these prayers, there appeared in flesh and blood the incarnation of the Almighty Lord Shree Krishna and by His miracle and supreme will power imbibed in the minds of the people His divine morality and inculcated the spirit of virtue in His followers. This incarnation of the Lord is none but Swaminarayan or Sahajanand Swami, who has refined the hardest and lawless tribes of Gujrat, Kathiawar, and Kutch, who were found most difficult to be subdued even by the British authorities, making them law-abiding, harmless, peaceful, and virtuous. He thus contributed considerably to the establishment of peace and law under the British rule.
>
> M. C. *Trivedi*, A Brief Sketch of the Life and Teachings of Swaminarayan, 1916

THE MAJORITY OF KHOJAS recognized the Aga Khan as a charismatic leader well before the colonial court gave him the official legal status as imam of the Isma'ili sect. By "charisma" I refer to both Weber's understanding of charisma as an individual's exceptional and superhuman quality and Pierre Bourdieu's elaboration of Weber's definition that emphasizes the "recognition" aspect of charisma. Bourdieu argues that in order for an individual to assume charismatic authority, it is necessary to first understand what aspects of his biography make him socially predisposed to take on a charismatic position and, second, what "ethical or political dispositions" of his addressees activate an individual's

charisma—a process he refers to as "recognition."[1] One important aspect of the Aga Khan's biography was his employment by the British state. The colonial state provided the resources for the Aga Khan to come to India, and in 1866 the colonial court legally validated his religious authority. However, even prior to the Aga Khan's arrival in India, Khoja beliefs and practices centered on devotion to a long-awaited imam. The initial "recognition" of the Aga Khan's charismatic authority can be traced to this particular religious disposition of messianic expectation on the part of his devotees.

In this chapter I discuss another figure, Swami Narayan, who too was "recognized" as a charismatic leader among certain castes of Gujarat in the nineteenth century. Before I explain the connections between these two leaders and groups, let me provide a description of the Swami Narayan movement's founder, Sahajanand Swami.

> Sahajanand Swami and Governor Malcolm both abhorred two practices known in the province, infanticide and immolation of widows. It was the custom among some Jariya Rajputs and Kathis to kill a newborn female child by drowning her in milk. Major A. Walker investigated infanticide in Kathiawar in 1807 and received an estimate that every year 3,000 girls were put to death in Kutch and Kathiawar. Though he believed the estimate to be exaggerated, he could find only five instances of Jadejas who preserved their daughters. Sahajanand taught that infanticide was forbidden because it comprised three sins: murder of a member of one's family, child murder, and the murder of a woman who deserved protection.

Sahajanand Swami (1781–1830) was the religious leader of the Swami Narayan *sampradāya*. He is also referred to as "Swami Narayan," an epithet of Vishnu, as his devotees believed and continue to believe that he was an incarnation of god. Sahajanand Swami started this Hindu Vaishnava movement in the Gujarat princely territories of Kach and Kathiawad during the early nineteenth century. The Swami Narayan *sampradāya* drew the attention of colonial officials like John Malcolm because Sahajanand Swami enforced a set of disciplining practices, such as the outlawing of infanticide, which spoke to the liberal and Christian values of the nineteenth-century colonial state. John Malcolm had a long career with the Company, working for the military and political administration in Central India as well as Gujarat. He negotiated the settlement that brought Gujarat under British control after the surrender of the Peshwa of Poona in 1818, thereby facilitating the expansion of British rule into the Gujarat territories. By 1830, the British had established their political power in Gujarat by directly administering the states of Ahmedabad, Broach, Kaira, Panch Mahal, and Surat under Bombay presidency, and

holding other regions, such as Kathiawad and Kach, as princely states that operated under the supervision of residents and political agents. Malcolm believed in the providence of British rule. With regard to the Gujarat territories, he explained, "We did not obtain our influence and power in Guzerat and over the court of Baroda, as we had in other cases, by a war or treaty with a sovereign in the enjoyment of authority; we came in as mediators between parties in a country torn by factions, and in which all rule was disorganized."[2]

The standard narrative about this region that emerges in colonial writings as well as Indian and Western histories of the Swami Narayan movement reflects the words of Malcolm, who believed that prior to the establishment of British control in the region, the Gujarat territories were in a state of political disorder. The scholar of Swami Narayan religion, Raymond Brady Williams, echoes this same position. He argues, "In short, Gujarat was a politically disunited area, lacking peace and security because of constant friction among various categories of chiefs and rulers. The Gujarati people were constantly subjected to the strains of war, plunder, changes in political rule, and hardships arising out of instability and the increasingly burdensome claims of a parade of victors."[3] Followers of the Swami Narayan movement claim that "Pax Britannica" was accompanied by "Pax Swaminarayana." "Pax Swaminarayana," however, "both complemented and was more effective than the former [Pax Britannica] in the positive transformation of Gujarati society in the first quarter of the nineteenth century."[4]

In this chapter, I explore the phenomenon of "Pax Swaminarayana"—the order brought to Gujarati society in the early nineteenth century by the Swami Narayan movement. In particular, I focus on the work Sahajanand Swami conducted in Kach and Kathiawad. These princely states were governed quite differently than the presidencies. The colonial state did not establish official administrative institutions, and instead it sought out local leaders to rule within the structures of native society. Although Sahajanand Swami was not a direct state appointee, he served the same function as native leaders appointed by the state. His *sampradāya* provided a salutary effect in the regions. Colonial administrators recognized and praised Sahajanand Swami's efforts with low-caste and tribal groups in particular because they believed these groups were responsible for the region's social and political instability.

Like the Aga Khan, Sahajanand Swami's authority was sanctioned by the colonial state subsequent to and because of a popular following that recognized his charisma. Colonial sources of the nineteenth century describe the practices of Swami Narayan converts, prior to their participation in

the Swami Narayan *sampradāya*, as morally and ethically wayward: performing infanticide, animal sacrifices, and consuming meat and alcohol. These sources all assert that Sahajanand Swami's teachings and practices, which functioned to discipline low-caste and tribal groups, were Hindu and Vaishnava. Although Vaishnavism was the theological structure through which Sahajanand Swami provided an institutionalized form of religion that welcomed low-caste and tribal groups, I discuss various Satpanth claims that Sahajanand Swami spent time as Satpanthi before he started the Swami Narayan *sampradāya*. I show how aspects of Swami Narayan practice have strong affinities with Satpanth practice. This is not to claim that Sahajanand Swami *was* Satpanthi and not Vaishnava. There is no doubt that the Swami Narayan *sampradāya* was Vaishnava. However, I show how Swami Narayan religious identity, like the formation of Ismaili identity, consolidated as a sect within the context of nineteenth-century colonial rule, through popular support of a charismatic leader, and from the perspective of Satpanth historical memory, through contact with the Satpanth milieu.

Swami Narayan as Reformer

Swami Narayan devotees, such as H. T. Dave, describe the situation in Gujarat, prior to the arrival of Sahajanand Swami, as a period of moral and political disorder. According to Dave, this was a time in which deviant religious practices subsumed Gujarat's social fabric:

> During the early part of the 18th century, India was ruptured and divided. The political, social, and religious ties were loosened. The rise of the Vama Marga and the Shaakta Cult led to the deterioration in the ethical and social values. Degeneration and decay undermined the morality of the people to such an extent that people became addicts to wine and meat. Adultery became rampant. Vedas were misinterpreted so as to justify the performance of himsamaya yajnas. People had abandoned every ethical code to indulge in the voluptuous pleasures arising from wine, woman, and wealth. Social and religious structures had entirely crumbled. Lawlessness had prevailed.[4]

In another earlier text, *A Brief Sketch of the Life and Teachings of Swaminarayan*, M. C. Trivedi invokes the same image of religious decline, but within the specific framework of avatarist theology:

> Whenever Divine religion is hampered and wicked actions predominate, I assume a form to protect saints, to destroy devils, and to establish religion. I come into concrete existence from time to time.—Bhagwadgeeta

> The sacred promise given by the Almighty Lord Shree Krishna was fulfilled, when time demanded the coming into this world of a similar incarnation. During the latter half of the eighteenth century India was disturbed to the utmost by wild unruly tribes. Crimes of the most cruel nature were being committed by thugs and robbers. India was divided among several petty Rajas who were at variance with one another and were disturbing the peace, prosperity, and happiness of the general mass of the population of India. The whole atmosphere was thus filled with crime and immorality and consequently sages of the time expected the interference of some divine authority to work out the salvation of mankind under these hard circumstances and offered prayer to the Almighty to fulfill His divine promise. In response to these prayers there appeared on earth and blood the incarnation of the Almighty Lord Shree Krishna and by His miracles and supreme will power imbibed into the minds of the people His divine morality and inculcated the spirit of virtue in His followers. This incarnation of the Lord is none but Swaminarayan or Sahajanand Swami, who has reformed the barbarous and lawless tribes of Gujarat, Kathiawar, and Kutch, who were found most difficult to be subdued even by the Kshatriyas, thus making them law abiding harmless, peaceful and virtuous. He has contributed considerably to the establishment of peace and law and order in the British rule.

Both Swami Narayan authors represent the historical setting of early nineteenth-century Gujarat as a period of tumult and upheaval and address similar issues—the prevalence of "lawlessness," disputes among various leaders, and overall political disorder in the region. These authors pair moral concerns with political ones. Dave situates the rise of Vama-Marga cult practices in relation to the specific political context of a divided India and the prevalence of "lawlessness."[5] Trivedi attributes "immorality" to the crimes of "thugs" and "robbers" and the fighting among the "petty Rajas." This all changed, according to Trivedi, with the arrival of Swami Narayan. As a *deus ex machina*, he stepped in, fulfilling the earlier "sacred promise" of Krishna and single-handedly transformed both the political structure and moral composition of Gujarati society.

Sahajanand Swami's social reform efforts with tribal communities and low-caste groups drew the attention of various colonial writers, such as Bishop Heber, who, in *Narrative of a Journey through the Upper Provinces of India, from Calcutta to Bombay, 1824–1825*, described the social situation of Gujarat and Swami Narayan's work during his visit in the following way:

> The Kholees, or Coolies form perhaps 2/3 population of Guzerat and are considered the original inhabitants of the country. . . . Their ostensible and, indeed, chief employment, is agriculture, and they are said to be often industrious farmers and labourers, and while kindly treated, to pay their rent to Government as well, at least, as their Rajpoot neighbours. They live,

however, under their own Thakoors, whose authority alone they willingly acknowledge, and pay little respect to the [illegible] unless when it suits their interest or they are constrained by the presence [illegible] In other respects, they are one of the most turbulent and predatory tribes in India and with the Bheels, make our frontier districts more unsettled and the maintenance of our authority more expensive there than any other district of the eastern empire. The mugut [illegible] has long been a proverb among men in their condition, than any others of the [illegible] whom I have met with; and the regular troops, and even the [illegible] are constantly called out against them. Yet in no country are the [illegible] more common. Their forays and plundering excursions [illegible] frequent in a greater proportion of, what would be called [illegible] the generality of landed proprietors addicted to acts of violence and bloodshed.

Heber continues: "Some good had been done, already, among these wild people, by the preaching and popularity of the Hindu Reformer Swamee Narain. He preached a great degree of purity, forbidding his disciples so much as to look on any woman whom they passed. He condemned theft and bloodshed, and those villages and districts which had received him, from being among the worst, were now among the best."

Heber's account of the "tribal" dilemma in the Gujarat territories reveals his conflicting position on the issue. It is clear that Heber wanted to resolve the problem of "turbulent" and "predatory" tribes because, as a Christian, he believed that these groups were in desperate need of social reform. However, as his account explains, it would have been impossible to undertake such a project without taxing the state financially. Swami Narayan offered the necessary moral and practical corrective to this situation. By instilling "purity," abolishing adultery and theft, and uplifting the "worst" villages to the "best," Swami Narayan's teaching and movement provided a proxy solution to the problem of how to govern without expending further resources, and simultaneously, worked to transform the moral character of society.

Trivedi attributed Swami Narayan's ability to transform society to his status as an avatar, and Bishop Heber interpreted Swami Narayan's life and teachings through Christian discourse of redemption. Writing for the *Asiatic Journal for British India and Its Dependences* in 1823, an East India Company official remarks upon the ways in which Swami Narayan's doctrines focused on correcting moral behavior and promoting equality for all:

> People of all Casts and persuasions resort to Swamee Narran, and the number of his followers is very great, estimated by the most intelligent natives at about one hundred thousand (100,000), principally from Kateewar and the western districts of Guzerat. Hindoos of all the four classes, Mahomedans,

and even Others are admitted, but all are seated and fed, according to their Casts. The Swamee himself, who is a Brahmin, eats indiscriminately with any [illegible] down as Rajpoots, but not below them.

The grand principle [illegible] seems to be, that the souls of all mankind are equal. [illegible] observed by his followers, but they are told, that these [illegible] are most corporeal and will all be left behind with the body; and [illegible] will receive the rewards or punishments of [illegible] without any regard to the Casts in which [illegible] The principal observances enjoined are abstinence from what are represented as the four besetting sins of the flesh, indulgence [illegible] eating flesh, stealing, and [illegible] with other [illegible]

Similar to Heber's observations, this writer too noticed moral rectitude in Swami Narayan's teachings. Focusing more on Swami Narayan philosophy rather than social issues, this company official's comments are primarily the origins of [illegible] representations. For example, he notices the leveling mechanisms of Swami Narayan teaching, explaining the "grand principle" as "the souls of all mankind are equal." Further, he remarks upon the commandment based injunctions, such as the forbidding of meat and alcohol, stealing, and adultery as the "sins of the flesh." The representation of Swami Narayan practice and philosophy in the company official's writings is filtered [illegible] the doctrinal language of Christianity as well. Heber addressed Swami Narayan's work with tribals in relation to the prohibition of stealing and adultery, which are also Christian commandments. The above writer also comments on these same two injunctions, but he focuses on a particular strand of asceticism he observes in the teaching. That is to say his description of Swami Narayan "observances" as the "sins of the flesh," as well as his understanding of Swami Narayan teleology, such as the freedom of souls from "corporeal trammels," resonate with Augustinian notions of Christian mind/body dualism, rather than political concerns for social reform.

Writing almost twenty years later about the history and topography of Gujarat, another colonial official, H. G. Briggs, also described the work of Swami Narayan in terms of religious and social reform: "Determined upon a life of celibacy and the good of his fellow-creatures, Sahajanand cultivated the acquaintance of the learned, and as his doctrines were found to breathe by their own interpretation, 'a sound and discreet morality,' men of considerable attainments joined his cause and associated themselves in his laudable endeavours."[11] Briggs explains further:

> But the genius of Sahajanand Swami was not confined simply to the rigid re-establishment of Hindu worship in virgin integrity—it was also directed

against the irregularities of the age and to the recovery of thousands of those unfortunate men to be found throughout Guzerat, whose means of subsistence hitherto were equally lawless and precarious: of his success in the latter respect, there is abundant testimony, from the vast hordes who have been reclaimed to honest and industrious pursuits—while the present unsettled state of the country compared to its condition previously, will speak volumes for him, who, at least in this respect, justly earns the appellation of reformer; . . . The wide latitude, too, which his doctrines comprise, permitting men of all classes to become their followers, so long as they are faithfully observed—has materially tended towards Kolis, Kuns, Grasias, Rajputs, and a vast variety of castes and classes of men, to rally under his banner.[14]

Similar to the ways in which the previous colonial writers found the spirit of Christianity operating in some form in the work of Swami Narayan, here Briggs writes that the doctrines themselves "breathe morality." However, he is not focused exclusively on the theology of Swami Narayan philosophy. The "virgin integrity" of Swami Narayan teachings was just one component that turned "vast hordes to honest and industrious pursuits." Similar to Heber, Briggs attributes the transformation of the once "lawless" and "precarious" groups to Swami Narayan's unique disciplining powers. Briggs assessed the situation almost twenty years after Heber and the company official. According to his analysis, the situation of Gujarat drastically changed from 1830 to 1849 because of the number of people Swami Narayan drew into his movement by the mid-nineteenth century.

Colonial responses and writings on the movement read the life and teachings of Swami Narayan's work through the lens of reform. This perspective necessitates an understanding of the connections between the Swami Narayan movement and colonial Christianity and liberalism. Did these colonial accounts of the movement merely employ a liberal and/or Christian hermeneutical framework when recounting the life and teachings of Swami Narayan? Or, is it the case that, similar to religious traditions that developed in the nineteenth century under the rubric of reform movements, such as the Arya Samaj and Brahmo Samaj, the Swami Narayan movement was in fact the product of an encounter between Hinduism/Vaishnavism and colonial Christianity? Before we turn to a discussion of the specific character of Swami Narayan reform, we need to first think about the political context, specifically the role of the colonial state in the areas which Swami Narayan worked. John Malcolm's "Minute on Kach" provides important information on this subject.[15]

Malcolm's Minute and the "Native Question"

In 1810, when John Malcolm was governor of Bombay, he made a trip to Kach and Kathiawad. Malcolm was dispatched to the western regions to survey the situation and assess whether or not the British ought to officially annex the territories. The areas of Kach and Kathiawad were princely states. They were governed by local authorities, and unlike presidencies, there were no formal colonial institutions established. Princely states like Kach and Kathiawad posed a specific kind of problem, as intimated by Bishop Heber. They were regions that were not important enough to govern directly because they were not considered profitable. However, they needed to be managed, and for this reason, the right kind of local leadership was crucial.

John Malcolm explicates the nature of this dilemma in his Minute on Kach, written in 1830. The Minute begins with a long discussion of the history of rulers starting in 1802, where he provides a history of the British government's involvement in the regions, the number of troops stationed, and the mediation efforts between various leaders. He focuses a considerable part of the discussion on the vulnerable state of the gulf of Kach, describing it as prone to both "pirates and plunderers"[16] as well as the possible encroachment of "outside" groups, such as the "Ameers of Scinde."[17] After outlining this history of the region and the politically factious state of the territories, Malcolm concludes that it is important that the British government remain as is with regard to the region:

> From this concise statement of the progress of our connexion with Cutch, it will be sufficiently evident it has been forced upon us in order to protect Kattywar and the commerce of the coast from increasing bands of pirates and of plunderers. And it is further evident that were we to abandon the connexion tomorrow, we should have the same evils to encounter, and be in all probability put to a far greater expence and become subject to much more embarrassment than we ever can, by preserving the alliance. On these grounds, therefore, it is not expedient to withdraw, but were it so, the maintenance of our faith renders such a measure impracticable.[18]

He explains that the main reason why the British should not annex the territories is because of the likely financial drain to the government. At the same time, he insists that the colonial state should not relinquish all investment in the region altogether. In the closing statements of the Minute, he writes, "It [Cutch] must still be viewed more as a military outwork which necessity compelled us to occupy than a part of our settled province," and as a "military outwork" he argues, "it would fall an easy

conquest to Scind, and it could not have a fate more injurious to our interests if a European enemy was in possession of the Indus."[19]

Malcolm's writings about the territories indicate that the colonial state's primary investment and concern with the region was its strategic location. The fear of it being taken over by Sind and/or "a European enemy" was reason enough to not withdraw from the western states. Rather than bringing in more troops to resolve the problem, he instead offered a specific solution to the question of what the political configuration of the area ought to look like. "This small country should be managed by natives under the supervision of a Resident. . . ."[20] He outlined the terms of this setup as the following:

> Success in imparting knowledge as it tends to make confidence supplant fear, will maintain the public peace better than armies, and in countries like Cutch or Kattywar (I speak in ample evidence of a similar commonly in Malwa) there is no means so adapted to gain these ends as the Resident having near his person or with those officers he employs, the sons, brothers, and relations of the chiefs of the country, and particularly when they are young and disposed to receive instruction. Such persons . . . will soon become a link not only of establishing confidence but of giving to the British representative a place in the regard of all branches of the family to which they belong.[21]

Indirect rule in India with the British—what was later described as a Residency system—later became a model of governance throughout the colonized world.[22] European powers adopted two broad patterns of rule over non-Western countries, indirect and direct rule. According to Michael Fisher, Europeans often chose indirect rule because it did not exact the same amount of resources from the home country, as did the latter. This was, ultimately, the reason why indirect rule was considered a success and was thus the model of rule that was later employed by other colonial powers, such as the Belgians, Germans, Dutch, and the Japanese. Fisher explains that the regions occupied under indirect rule were those "holding the least promise for agricultural, mineral, or industrial development."[23]

Kach and Kathiawad offered no immediate agrarian or industrial profit for the government, but it was necessary to protect the regions from local and outside invaders. For these reasons, Malcolm stipulated a Residency setup. For this system to operate efficiently, it was necessary to establish the proper form of local leadership. Malcolm addresses the importance of selecting a specific type of ruler at length in the Minute. This problem appears within the context of his discussion about infanticide among the Jadeja caste of Rajputs. Malcolm writes:

> I took the opportunity of this large concourse of Chiefs to give my sentiments most fully on the subject of Infanticide. They knew, I said, the solicitude of the British government regarding the abomination of that most barbarous crime, which so far from being countenanced and sanctioned by the usages of Hindoos, was held in utter execration by all of that race except the few tribes of Rajpoots by whom it was introduced, and continued to be practiced from the motives of family pride. The Jarejahs of Cutch . . . have long been reproached with this horrid and so unnatural usage."

Malcolm is remembered for condoning the practice of infanticide among the Jadeja caste of Rajputs. In the above passage, this point is made through his own words, as he states that the Jadejas continue to perform the "barbarous crime" of infanticide. Throughout the Minute, however, it is not infanticide that he repudiates but the practitioners themselves, the Jadejas. "As the Jarejahs chiefs have become indolent and indifferent to all matters that do not immediately affect their personal interests. . . . They should in such case either be deprived of their estates or be subjected to heavy fines."[24]

The first passage criticizes the Jadejas for practicing infanticide, but here it seems that they are characterized as lazy and rude without any reference to their practices. As the Minute unfolds, however, a noticeably different group overshadows the subject of infanticide altogether. The reasons for his disdain, however, only become clear by the end of the report. "The chiefs of Cutch have encroached upon their Ruler [Rao] till his revenues bear no just proportion to his condition as their Head, and it should be a principle of our Policy to take every fair advantage of events to increase his power to the diminution of that depraved and unmanageable class of petty chiefs whose existence in their actual state is at variance with all plans of improvement and calculated to render unprofitable if not to destroy the alliance we have formed with this principality."[25]

In this passage, Malcolm explains that two distinct groups exercised political authority in the region: the Jadejas and the "Ruler," the Rao of Kach. The infanticide issue recedes from the discussion, and the Jadejas (whom he refers to as "petty chiefs") are discussed in terms of their political role, rather than cultural or ritual practices. When Malcolm describes the Jadejas as "unmanageable," he is not commenting to the subject of infanticide any longer; rather, his interest is in governance, specifically in articulating his support for the "Ruler" over and against the Jadeja "petty chiefs."

This discussion of infanticide was clearly tied to the more pressing issue of establishing the right form of leadership.[27] The Rao was selected over the Jadejas because he was identified as better suited to protect the needs of the state. This assessment was made on the basis of the Rao's moral character. Malcolm describes the Rao as "a youth of uncommon

promise" and someone who "has reaped great benefit from the lessons of the Reverend Mr Gray, Chaplain at Bhooj."[28] According to Malcolm, this type of pedigree was important for leadership because "in a petty state like Cutch everything depends upon the character of the Prince. . . . It is to Princes and chiefs in a state like Cutch that we must look for the reform of tribes like those who inhabit this country."[29]

Fisher explains indirect rule as a primarily economic solution for colonial governance. Malcolm's analysis of Kach and Kathiawad demonstrates that the question of resources was front and center. Malcolm concludes that annexing the territories does not make financial sense. He thus offered an alternative to co-opting the territories, a Resident and local leader. As for the local leader, he had the option of a member of the Jadeja caste or the Rao. The former group, however, did not abide by the same moral principles. Malcolm's arguments for supporting the Rao demonstrate that his concerns extended beyond the basic question of resources. As he explained, "chiefs" such as the Rao are integral to reforming native communities.

This latter point gives credence to Mahmood Mamdani's argument that indirect rule was not simply an economic solution to the problem of resources. Indirect rule also offered a way to manage what he calls the "native question."[30] Mamdani describes this problem in the context of colonial Africa, where, he explains, the imperial state opted for the indirect rule form of governance as a way to prevent uprisings from natives. Although his discussion of the "native question" centers on indirect rule as a late imperial phenomenon, his point about the ideological underpinnings of indirect rule are just as relevant to early nineteenth-century princely India. However, in the case of Kach and Kathiawad, the "native question" manifests itself through a specifically liberal and Christian concern with reform.

Malcolm's Minute, like the other colonial writers who comment on the areas in which the Swami Narayan movement emerged, addressed the necessity for political and social reform in the early nineteenth century. Malcolm discussed the problem in relation to the larger question of annexing territories, and the first three colonial administrators focused on the need for social reform—the context in which they call attention to the work of Swami Narayan. The Swami Narayan writers also assumed this similar narrative of political disunity in the regions. They interpreted Swami Narayan's "arrival" in the language of redemption. That is to say, they invoked a particular theological interpretation of his work and movement that was necessarily connected to an understanding of him as an avatarist figure.

The political authority of the Rao provided one answer to the "native question," and as I argue below, Swami Narayan's Vaishnavism provided

another kind of solution through the teachings and practices of his *sampradāya*. We can now return to the question of why colonial administrators interpreted Sahajanand Swami's movement as reform. The historical timing of the growth of the *sampradāya*, flourishing during the nineteenth century, would lend support to the argument that Swami Narayan teachings were similar to reform-based Brahmanical movements such as Arya Samaj and Brahmo Samaj that developed through Western influences and argued for a "purified" Hinduism. However, turning back to the discussion of indirect rule, Fisher's argument suggests that those regions of the empire that were not administered under direct rule often did not undergo the same transformations to modernity and ultimately nationalism as the areas occupied by direct rule because of their lack of cultural capital. Although Swami Narayan's life was interpreted as that of a social reformer, he did not, for example, share the vision of reformist groups such as the Brahmo Samaj and Arya Samaj that were inspired by leaders who were recipients of English education and the colonial institutional apparatus. Hindu reform movements such as the Brahmo Samaj and Arya Samaj took shape in the milieu of Bombay and Bengal presidencies, which were spaces where native elites wrote about Hinduism through the language and discourse of Western modernity and Christianity. Unlike the presidencies, the colonial administration neither financed nor cultivated civic institutions in the princely states. Therefore, the princely context did not produce the same class of native elites educated in English language and literature. As a consequence, neither were the same kinds of reform movements initiated. The Swami Narayan movement therefore was not reformist in this received sense of Hindu reform. The Swami Narayan movement produced a certain kind of reform, yet this happened through the discipline Sahajanand Swami established among tribal and low-caste groups. The Swami Narayan *sampradaya* is more aptly characterized as a "traditionalist" formation, rather than modernist or reformist, as it did not consolidate within a specifically colonial cultural context of the presidencies.[31] Vaishnava Hinduism was the primary theological structure of this traditionalist formation, but as I will explain below, Satpanth accounts describe connections between Sahajanand Swami and Satpanth milieu as well.

Sahajanand Swami

Received historical and biographical writings about Sahajanand Swami agree on two points about this figure: first, that he spent much of his life peripatetic, and second, that he assumed several different names which

corresponded to various periods in his life. The background of where and when he was born—in 1781 in a village outside Ayodhya—as well as the details of his early travels and tutelage are also undisputed. His biographies all state that his birth name was Ghanshyam (one of the childhood names of Krishna), and after the death of his parents when he was eleven years of age, he left his home and traveled around northern India for about seven years. Ghanshyam undertook a period of itinerant wandering, and at this time he took the name Neelkanth.[32] He started his travels in the Himalayas, studied yoga there, and then traveled to major pilgrimage centers from north to south of the country—including places like Haridwar, Badrinath, Mathura, Jagannathpuri, and finally Srirangam, Madurai, and Rameshwaram. After seven years of traveling he arrived in Gujarat, where, after a pilgrimage to Dwarka, he decided to stay on. Afterwards he met a group of sadhus in Kathiawad, who introduced him to Ramananda Swami, a Vaishnava teacher of the philosophy of Ramanuja. When Ramananda Swami, the leader of this well-recognized *sampradāya*, met with Neelkanth, he initiated him as one of the ascetics and gave him the name Sahajanand Swami. Upon Ramananda Swami's death, he transferred the *gadi* to his new disciple, Sahajanand, who soon after spread the teachings of his tutelage at the popular level throughout Gujarat, Kutch, and Kathiawad.[33] Very soon after this new position, Sahajanand Swami's status changed, for after his initiation as a leader, his popularity grew so fast that he began to be revered as a manifestation of Krishna. He then began to be referred to as "Swami Narayan," which was also the specific mantra he gave to his disciples to repeat in their prayers.[34]

There is an additional name and period, however, that does not make it into the official Swami Narayan story. According to Satpanth accounts, the founder of the Swami Narayan *sampradāya* was named Harishankar, and spent time in the Satpanthi village of Pirana. The text *Satpanth Yagna Vidhi* (Satpanth Rituals and Procedures), which was written in 1935, provides an account of the Pirana Satpanth community's history and practices. The text explains the history of the Satpanth community of Pirana. During the early twentieth century, many members of the Pirana Satpanth community joined the Arya Samaj as well as Swami Narayans as part of the recruitment efforts by these groups. The Arya Samajis as well as Swami Narayans claimed that the Pirana community was and had always been Hindu. The book *Satpanth Yagna Viddhi* was written at a time when some Satpanthis of the Pirana community joined the Arya Samaj movement. In defense of the Pirana community, its headman, Syed Bava Ahmadali, wrote *Satpanth Yagna Vidhi* to provide information about this Satpanth community, trace its history, and prove that the

community had no connection with any modern movements that were attempting to draw members from the Pirana Satpanthis.

One of the points the author makes in the book is that various figures had exploited the Pirana Satpanth community. Within the context of this discussion about the many people who had come to Pirana for guidance but then started their own groups with the knowledge of Satpanth teaching and practice, there is an account of a man named Harishankar. He is described as a son of a Brahmin who, sometime in the nineteenth or late eighteenth century, arrived from northern India to the Satpanth Pirana community outside Ahmedabad to study with some *sadhus*. Ahmadali explains that this man took to Satpanth teaching so much that he decided to take initiation under a guru named Nanjikaka. Harishankar was bright and inquisitive and well liked among the Satpanthis because he was so devoted to learning. Under the direction of this Nanjikaka, he assumed a new name, Haryakaka, learned Gujarati, and slowly grew to be part of this community. Having won the trust of the community, the author explains, Haryakaka was chosen to go to Surat to collect money (*dashed ugrahni*) for the Satpanth community, which was a post for certain members of this particular Satpanth group. However, this new initiate Haryakaka never returned. It was later discovered that this Harishankar/Haryakaka stayed in Surat after collecting the money, but kept it for himself. Worried about the whereabouts of Haryakaka, Nanjikaka set off to find him. Ahmadali explains that when Haryakaka found out that Nanjikaka was on his way to find him, he escaped from Surat, heading to the Veravar port in Kathiawad. According to the author, he did not actually make it to the port because of hindrances in the journey, but he decided to hide in a Ramanandi shrine among some *sadhus*.[35]

In 2008, when I asked Satpanthi leaders at Pirana about Sahajanand Swami, they claimed that he started out as Satpanthi before he started his own religion. Dominique Sila-Khan and Zawahir Moir wrote about this same response when they conducted research at Pirana ten years before this.[36] The passage from *Satpanth Yagna Vidhi* is not enough to substantiate an historical claim that "Harishankar" of Satpanth *Yagna Vidhi* was actually Sahajanand Swami. However, there is ethnographic evidence of an overlap between Satpanthis and Swami Narayans in the nineteenth century. Many caste Patels at Pirana who were previously Satpanthi became followers of Swami Narayan.[37] The Gazetteer of the Bombay Presidency of 1879 attests to a specific Swami Narayan contingent at Pirana in the late nineteenth century.[38] The same gazetteer entry also states, "The book of religious precepts, Shikshapatri, written by Imam Shah is supposed to be read by all."[39] *Shikshāpatrī* is the name of the foundational Swami

Narayan text, and it is also the name of a *ginān*. In the next section, I analyze the textual parallels between the Swami Narayan *Shikshapatri* and Satpanth *Shikshapatri* that suggest ritual connections between Satpanth and Swami Narayan religious domains.

Swami Narayan *Shikshapatri*

The Swami Narayan *Shikshāpatrī*[40] is a devotional, moral, and dietary manual of conduct for devotees who choose to participate in the Swami Narayan *sampradāya*. The text begins with the following verses:

> I meditate within my heart on Shri Krishna who enjoyed play in Vrindavan, on whose left side is Radha, on whose breast lies Sri.
> From Vrttalaya, Sahajanand Swami, write this *Shikshapatri* to all my followers, living in different places.
> The youths Ayodhyaprasad and Raghuvir, the sons of my brothers Ramapratap and Icchaarama, the children of dharma.
> The *naishthik brahmacharis*, the head of whom is Mukundananda, and *grahasthas*, such as Mayarama Bhata and other followers.
> And women, whether married and widowed, who become my disciples, and all the *sadhus*, such as Muktanand and others.
> Let these words, which sustain one's *dharma*, be read always by all these people, accompanied by the remembrance of *Shri Narayan*, and according to scriptures.[41]

In the opening verses of *Shikshapatri*, Sahajanand Swami presents himself as leader of the *sampradaya* and author of the foundational text. Sahajanand introduces his father and brothers in order to explain that the son of each brother will be designated as his successor *acharya*. Thereafter he explains that the *sampradāya* consists of men who have taken vows of celibacy (*naisthik brahmcharis* and *sadhus*), householders (*grahastas*), and women. This particular social grouping of devotees operates in tandem with, as we discover later in the text, the older and more established social order of caste hierarchy:

> One should not abandon his duty to class and stage in life, nor abide outside his dharma, nor have anything to do with heretical or false teachers.[42]
> Brahmins should possess tranquility, patience, contentment, and similar virtues. Kshatriyas should be heroic and display qualities such as fortitude.
> Vaishyas should involve themselves in the cultivation of land, trade, and money lending. The Shudras should service the twice born.[43]

Sahajanand Swami modeled the structure of the Swami Narayan *sampradāya* on the tradition of the Vallabhacharaya *sampradāya*,[44] which,

on the one hand, drew from the entire spectrum of classes but, on the other hand, retained caste divisions and rules. The Swami Narayan *sampradāya*, like the Vallabha *sampradāya*, was premised on a Vaishnava theology that brought all caste groups (and noncaste groups) together, under the philosophy of the equality of all beings.[45] Sahajanand also built aspects of his religious teachings and practices from the Vallabhacarya *sampradāya*. Vaishnava rituals, such as fasting and modes of worship, followed those in accordance with the teachings of Vitthalanath, Vallabha's younger son, who succeeded Vallabha in 1543.[46] Sahajanand Swami locates his teachings, theologically, within the frame of Vaishnavism. However, Sahajanand makes it clear in the *Shikshāpatrī* that his philosophical doctrines of Vaishnavism are aligned with those of *vishistadvaita*—qualified nondualism, as opposed to the *sudhhadvaita* (pure dualism) of the Vallabha *sampradāya*.

Although rituals such as fasts and modes of worship were adopted from the Vallabha *sampradāya*, *Shikshāpatrī* emphasizes a very different theological orientation from those the Vallabha *sampradāya* texts convey. The Vallabha *sampradāya*, what is also referred to as the Pushtimarg (literally, path of grace), recognized five types of human love through which a devotee could channel his devotion to Krishna: friendship, parental love, servile love, serene love, and erotic love.[47] Sahajanand Swami, by contrast, made it clear that Krishna was not to be understood as having any kind of erotic relationship. Sahajanand Swami forbade playing *holi* as well as singing wedding songs and *bhajans* that had any kind of sexual innuendos—even those songs about Radha as a consort of Krishna. Moreover, Sahajanand prohibited specific Pushtimarg practices for his *sampradāya*. For example, the injunction on ascetics to not having anything to do with men dressed as women refers to the dramatic performances of the Vallabhites.[48]

Sahajanand Swami's conscious positioning of himself as the *sampradāya*'s authoritative founder is the most outstanding difference between the Swami Narayan and Pushtimarga *sampradāya*.[49] In the opening verses of the *Shikshāpatri*, Sahajanand provides a systematic presentation of his lineage and vision of succession. It is obvious that he composed the text with the purpose of creating and ensuring the continuity of the *sampradāya*.[50] And for this reason, it seems, Vallabha did not assume the same kind of status as object of devotion that Sahajanand Swami did.[51] What further distinguishes the Swami Narayan *sampradāya* from other Vaishnava groups, such as the Vallabha *sampradāya*, is how the foundational text itself, formulated for the purposes of indoctrination, makes the condition of following the *Shikshāpatrī* a priority in membership.

Let this letter of instructions, which has important objects, and promotes the welfare of all beings be studied with focused mind by all these (persons).
Those people who follow what is prescribed by the scriptures will be greatly happy both in this world and in the future.
But those bad-minded ones, who willfully transgress, will meet great misery here and in the future.

Within the Swami Narayan *Shikshāpatrī*, proper practices are necessarily tied to the authority of the specific founder Sahajanand Swami, who, as the text reveals, places himself as both author and commissioner of *Shikshāpatrī*'s proper actions. As sixth verse explains, "Let these words, which sustain one's dharma, be read always by all these people accompanied by the remembrance of Shri Narayan, and according to scriptures."[59] Moreover, by emphasizing the importance of his *Shikshāpatrī* (and in turn his authority) within the frame of Vaishnava theology, as articulated in the "remembrance of Shri Narayan," *Shikshāpatrī* necessarily created the conditions for Sahajanand Swami to be revered as "Swami Narayan." In this way, Sahajanand's particular formatting and tailoring of *Shikshāpatrī* outlined a sectarian Vaishnava community in which the terms of participation were set up in relation to the centrality of Sahajanand's authority as founding guru as well as object of devotion.

Sahajanand's authority as founder and center of the *sampradāya* was one way he anchored the Swami Narayan community. The second equally important means through which a community was created and sustained was through practices, specifically those practices that served to Sanskritize the theological orientation of the *sampradaya*.[60] Sahajanand Swami asserted the authority of "high" deities such as Vishnu, Siva, Parvati, Ganapati, and Hanuman[61] and enforced strict vegetarianism as well as prohibition of animal sacrifices.[62] As I elaborate further below, through comparisons with Satpanth texts, the *Shikshāpatrī* provides a unique formulation of proper ritual conduct with equal emphasis on moral, devotional, and dietary behavior that is also shared in the Satpanth structure and religious worldview.

Comparisons between Swami Narayan and Satpanth Texts

The Swami Narayan *Shikshāpatrī*, shares its "manual of conduct" form and with two Satpanth *gināns*, *Shikshāpatrī*[63] and *So Kiriyā*.[64] The Swami Narayan text is oriented towards Vaishnava theology and practice, but

despite this sectarian alignment one finds the same kinds of prescriptions articulated in the *gināns* in the Swami Narayan text. The ten basic subjects of the Satpanth *So Kiriyā*—doctrine and devotion, general principles of behavior, dealings with others, business dealings, abstinence, women and the family, charity and hospitality, eating and diet, personal hygiene, and sundry prescriptions[65]—are enjoined in the Swami Narayan *Shikshapatri*, as well. Just as *So Kiriyā* locates the entire set of one hundred proper actions as central to Satpanth dharma, in the opening verses of *Shikshapatri*, Sahajanand requests that his "words, which both sustain one's dharma and are according to scriptures, be read always by all these people (devotees), along with remembrance of Narayan."[66] In terms of diet, both Satpanth and Swami Narayan texts forbid the consumption of the same items: tobacco, onions, and garlic. The injunctions against these food items are dispersed throughout the Satpanth texts.[67] The Swami Narayan *Shikshāpatri* states that all men and women should not consume intoxicants such as tobacco, and adds that Brahmins by caste should not eat onions, garlic, and any type of similar foods.[68] Within the discussion of the specific rules and regulations for the different groups, many of the moral actions prescribed and proscribed in the Satpanth texts are also replicated in the Swami Narayan one, but with some additions and alterations. Both Swami Narayan and Satpanth texts express the importance of not killing living beings, knowingly, but the former expands on this, specifically in relation to animal sacrifice.[69] The injunction against adultery is explicit for all devotees in both Satpanth and Swami Narayan texts.[70] In the Swami Narayan *Shikshāpatrī*, adultery falls in line with the prohibition of other vices such as gambling, which is also prohibited by the Satpanth *So Kiriyā*.[71] The injunction against suicide is also found in both texts, for the Satpanth texts state that taking one's life through poison or drowning will guarantee transmigration to rebirth,[72] while the Swami Narayan *Shikshāpatrī* states that no one should commit suicide in a pilgrimage place, and explicates further that one should never commit suicide out of anger, or due to the frustration of committing some improper behavior and should not commit suicide by taking poison.[73]

The subject of overall health and hygiene is another topic that is given importance in both poems. There are several *kriyās* that are tied to the notion of ritual cleansing.

After relieving yourself, take five sips of water
Through taking water, abandon desire
Take three sips of water properly

Do not keep your body unclean.
Take clay to wash your hands.
He who does not do so does not become clear
Do not drink water without filtering it.[67]

The Swami Narayan *Shikshāpatrī* addresses this issue of ritual cleansing as well, but specifically in relation to Vaishnava devotion:

Everyday, the devotee ought to awake before the sun comes up, and after remembering the name of Krishna, should proceed with the rites of body purification
Having sat in a separate place, the devotee ought to clean his teeth, and having bathed with clean water, should put on two garments
Then, sitting on a clean and single seat, placed on purified ground, he shall sip water, facing east or north.[68]

The Satpanth and Swami Narayan texts also address the importance of interaction with others. *So Kiriyā* explains that one should not associate with those who are base,[70] and the Swami Narayan *Shikshāpatrī* states that one should not associate with thieves, wicked people, hypocrites, people who are in love, and those who act deceptively.[71] The discussion about general business etiquette in both texts, though different with regard to specific details, shares similar subject matter. The Satpanth *So Kiriyā* makes statements such as "Do not give short measure to anyone," "Do not take excessive profit in anything," "do not keep false records," "never demand money as bride-price," and "Do not run away with other people's money," which is followed by "as a son, you will certainly have to give it back."[72] The Swami Narayan text is, again, more specific in these matters than *So Kiriyā* and delineates separate obligations according to status. The similar subject matter of handling money is especially addressed to householders. Verses 143–147 explain

Business of giving or receiving land or property, even with a son or friend ought to be transacted with a witness, and in writing
In any situation of exchange of money in marriage, whether one's own or of another, the amount to be delivered ought not to be conducted verbally, but in writing, with a witness
One's expenditure ought to be in proportion to one's income. Otherwise, indeed, great misery will arise
In everyday life, one should take account of one's income and expenditure and write them down with one's own hand
A tithe of grain or money obtained by one occupation ought to be delivered to Krishna by his devotees and a twentieth part by those who are poor.[73]

Although the injunction to pay the tithe does not appear in either the Satpanth *Shikshāpatrī* or *So Kiriyā*, the tradition of paying a tithe is a

central Satpanth practice. Pranami Satpanthis contend that Sahajanand Swami started his own movement through the practice of the tithe. In the Swami Narayan foundational text *Shikshapatri*, paying the tithe is one of duties outlined for Swami Narayan devotees. Interestingly, this practice is institutionalized among only two religious groups today: the Swami Narayans and Ismailis.

Sahajanand Swami configured his *sampradāya* within the terms of Vaishnavism, and clearly Sahajanand Swami does not acknowledge the Satpanth tradition in the *Shikshāpatrī* at all. However, there are several shared practices in the two texts, and Satpanthis at Pranami today are precluded from consuming many of the same food, beverage, and intoxicants as the Swami Narayans. The specific injunctions are just one point of connection between Satpanth and Swami Narayan texts. The second is the rhetorical function the *Shikshāpatrī* serves. Through a list of injunctions, the text conveys a clear outline of practices that each Swami Narayan devotee must follow. The specific constellation of proper moral, devotional, and dietary behavior serves to order one's everyday life through ritual—both banal and religious. Sahajanand's *Shikshāpatrī* draws a very clear opposition between those who follow and those who stray from proper conduct. This modality is also enjoined in Satpanth texts. The Satpanth is expressed through teaching practice and its connection to the guru mandavatar figure. As conveyed in the *Yog Vani granths* for example, the division between right and wrong actions determines whether one is a Satpanthi or not, but at the same time encountering the guru provides the means by which the proper course of action can be ascertained. A similar kind of setup—between those who are "in" versus those who are "out" on the one hand, and the possibility to join "in" through the power of the guru, on the other—is foundational to the structure of the Swami Narayan *Shikshapatri* as well.

Although the *Shikshāpatrī* was written in 1829, five years before Sahajanand Swami's death, its ideas, tenets, and practices were established prior to the text's composition.[74] The *Shikshāpatrī* was certainly not the only text of the *sampradaya*. There are two major texts, the *Vachanamrut* and the *Satsangiivan*. The *vachanamrut* is a collection of Sahajanand Swami's sermons that are ordered by place and chronology, spanning the years of 1819–1829, that were supposedly given throughout his lifetime. The *Satsangiivan* is a compendium of all the teachings and stories of Sahajanand Swami's life. It is said, however, that these two texts served the same function of recruiting the large numbers of low-caste and tribal groups. The more theologically sophisticated Swami Narayan principles were conveyed in a simplified and concise

form to a range of classes, especially those who did not have access to Sanskrit.[75]

The *Shikshāpatrī* is the only text of the *sampradāya* actually written by Sahajanand Swami and commanded by him to be read everyday. In this regard, it must have played an important role in creating and sustaining the religious identity of the *sampradāya* as well. Ritual injunctions, therefore, provided an essential element through which Sahajanand Swami structured his *sampradāya* as a Vaishnava institution. This relation between ritual injunctions and religious identity formation in many ways parallels the formation of Khalsa Sikh identity. Harjot Oberoi has argued that Guru Gobind Singh established the Khalsa in the eighteenth century in order to resolve all ambiguities about Sikh religiosity.[76] Participating in the new Khalsa community, as mandated by Guru Gobind Singh, required each devotee to follow a set of obligatory practices that were outlined in a body of texts known as the *Rahit-namas*. Oberoi argues that Sikh practice was reconstructed through the authority of the *rahit* literature, which offered a series of ritual prescriptions that address all aspects of human life, ranging from how to eat to the nature of piety. According to Oberoi, the prescriptive nature of the *rahit* texts was fundamental to the construction and expansion of the Khalsa community over the course of the eighteenth century because the newly defined institution of the Khalsa attracted a large number of Punjabi Jats who were drawn to the type of social uplift the Khalsa offered. This institutional turn, premised on the notion of everyday discipline, functioned, first, as a way "to distinguish between outsiders and insiders," and second, as a means "to overcome indeterminacy in life, endowing social life with a certainty which it does not otherwise possess."[77]

Herein lies the parallel with the Swami Narayan *sampradāya*. Sahajanand Swami was able to offer social uplift to outcaste and tribal groups through the strict code of ritual behavior outlined in *Shikshāpatrī*. The Swami Narayan *sampradāya* provided a stabilizing structure and a corporate idea of religious belonging for low caste and tribal groups which, similar to the Khalsa, could "help face the unsettled and chaotic conditions."[78] Like the Khalsa, Swami Narayan *sampradāya* was a traditionalist rather than reformist formation. Unlike the reformist groups which were shaped by European and Christian texts and ideas, these groups relied on ritual practices for their formation. Ritual provided the necessary disciplinary function, and the *Shikshāpatrī* translated and transmitted the Swami Narayan code of ritual conduct, just as the *rahit* literature did for the Khalsa Sikhs. The Swami Narayan *Shikshāpatrī* thereby functioned as the conduit of Swami Narayan Vaishnava identity.

As I have argued with the Ismaʿīlī case, it is necessary to draw a distinction between religious practices and religious identity. My analysis of parallels between the Swami Narayan and Sarpanth *Shikshāpatris* suggests that Swami Narayan religious practices, which drew from multiple traditions, developed in a porous space unlike the Swami Narayan religious institution—which, similar to the Khalsa Sikhs and Ismaʿīlis, was established and sustained through the rationalizing and bounded logic of identity.

Conclusion

Sahajanand Swami's ministry in Kach and Kathiawad drew the attention of colonial officials, they affirmed Sahajanand Swami's charismatic role because they saw in him an effective political leader. As illustrated in Malcolm's "Minute" of the early nineteenth century, the political context in which Sahajanand's *sampradāya* flourished was princely Kach and Kathiawad. Writing about Kach and Kathiawad from a position of the colonial state's political concerns, Malcolm assessed the particular situation of the princely territories as in need of social reform and proper governance. The political situation of princely Kach and Kathiawad was a context where, on the one hand, the colonial state was not interested in extending itself any further through formal civic institutions, but simultaneously was concerned with protecting the territories. Malcolm's report in tandem with writings about the Swami Narayan *sampradāya* illustrate that Swami Narayan philosophy and practice were interpreted as a movement of social reform because of the social discipline it enforced upon groups that were perceived as volatile or in some way contributing to the unstable climate of the regions. Both colonial as well as Swami Narayan writings attribute the control of thug, tribal, and dacoit groups to Sahajanand Swami's efforts. Just as Swami Narayan writings interpreted Sahajanand Swami's life as divinely sanctioned through Vaishnava theology, colonial administrators described Sahajanand's ability to discipline these groups as work of a Christian savior. When Sahajanand Swami entered the scene with his teaching of disciplined Vaishnavism, colonial officials recognized and wrote about his *sampradāya*, it seems, precisely because it fulfilled liberal concerns of reform that ultimately served to allay anxieties and fears of the state by disciplining outcaste groups. In this way, Sahajanand Swami's disciplined Vaishnavism indirectly worked to mitigate the "thagi" issue central to the liberal enterprise concerned with "rooting out the evils of barbarism" in the nineteenth century.[79]

Why would tribal and low-caste groups choose to participate in the Swami Narayan *sampradāya*? What was the nature of Sahajanand's teaching that proved to be such a powerful corrective to the political and social situation of early nineteenth-century Kach and Kathiawad? Sahajanand Swami was understood as an incarnation of god, and there was no equivalent figure in, for example, the Vallabha *sampradāya*—the other dominant Vaishnava sect in the regions. Like the Aga Khan, Sahajanand Swami spoke to the ethical and political dispositions of his devotees. The Aga Khan's charisma was recognized because Satpanth beliefs and practices centered on the idea of imamate expectation. Sahajanand Swami implemented a religious system that attracted disenfranchised groups. He was able to assert his divine status because he provided a complete theological system—a community and an immediate center of devotion—for groups who did not have access to such a structure. This structure was based on devotional, ritual, and bodily discipline, which, like the eighteenth-century Khalsa Sikhs, demarcated insiders and outsiders, on the one hand, and offered entry into society and thus a form of upward mobility.

One final point about this sectarian formation and its connection to this book's study of Satpanth religious practices: The institutionalization of the *sampradāya* and the continuity of Sahajanand Swami's divine status were facilitated through the *Shikshāpatrī*, which communicated Swami Narayan teachings and practices into the unambiguous medium of injunctions. I have shown how this text, which is Vaishnava in theological orientation, shares the same structure and certain rituals with the Satpanth *Shikshāpatrī*. A shared tradition of ritual practices between Swami Narayans and Satpanthis would not be out of the realm of possibility considering Satpanth claims about Swami the Narayan presence in Satpanth history. However, the Hindu and specifically Vaishnava constitution of the *sampradāya* make it especially difficult for the Swami Narayan community to acknowledge a history with non-Hindus, such as the Satpanthis, let alone the possibility of a connection to the Isma'ili Muslims.

CHAPTER FIVE

Sect and Secularism in the Early Nationalist Period

> It is not proper to read Hindu things into your ilm. When you were Hindus at that time, Pir Sadr al Din showed you the way. That time is gone. Now recite the praise of Mawla Ali and his progeny, the Imams of the time. Recite the Praise of the Hazar Imam. Now give up the nine avataras. Recite the praise of our forefathers in the Dasami Avatara.
>
> *Aga Khan III, 1899*

THE IMAMATE OF SULTAN MUHAMMAD SHAH, or Aga Khan III (1877–1957), marked another crucial juncture for Isma'ili identity formation. Sultan Muhammad Shah's authority, charismatically transferred from his grandfather, Aga Khan I, was in fact sustained through a similar set of conditions as those of his grandfather: first, through public support of and from the colonial state and second, through the redefinition of the *gināns*. This chapter explores these parallel circumstances, with specific focus on how Sultan Muhammad Shah consciously asserted a new Muslim identitarian agenda in both the public sphere of colonial politics and private sphere of Isma'ili devotion.

I begin with a discussion of Sultan Muhammad Shah's role as pan-Muslim leader in the early nationalist period—the political circumstances in which he gained public recognition. Sultan Muhammad Shah's discussions about Islam were informed by secular values of the colonial public sphere, such as Western education, participation in political life, and the privatization of religion. He followed in the footsteps of famous nineteenth-century Muslim reformists, most notably Syed Ahmad Khan, who campaigned for Muslim unity and progress. During the nationalist period, Sultan Muhammad Shah steered his efforts in the direction of separatist politics, where he played an integral role in pushing for the installation of separate electorates for Muslims, and, as first president of the All India Muslim League.

The idea of Islam that Sultan Muhammad Shah invoked was similar to Muhammad Ali Jinnah's—a secular or "empty" category that was politically instrumental for Muslim separatism. That is to say, since Islam—the concept through which Partition was justified—could not be grounded in nationalist sentiments of language, history, or geography, Jinnah appealed to a secular and post-Enlightenment idea of Islam-as-faith.[1] Similar to Jinnah, secularism was the frame through which Sultan Muhammad Shah shaped his vision of Islam, but Sultan Muhammad Shah configured his ideas about religion and politics through a specifically reformist angle that emphasized progress and social mobility.[2] Like many nineteenth-century reformists in the colonial Indian context, his understanding of Islam was modern and generated from the position of minority Muslim politics.

What I explore here is not just Sultan Muhammad Shah's political doctrine of secularism but rather how secular ideas operate.[3] In particular, I am interested in understanding the kinds of oppositions secular ideas and values create, and how, within the context of South Asian Islam, new parameters and definitions are established, displacing "dissonant" practices that cannot be assimilated into secularism's epistemic frame.[4]

Secular and "dissonant" religion play out in curious ways in Muhammad Shah's life. Practices of "dissonant" Islam—that which cannot be assimilated into the frame of modern reformist Islam—provided the platform from which he asserted his authority as the Isma'ili imam. Among the Indian Isma'ilis, Sultan Muhammad Shah was the Aga Khan—revered as the "hazar imam," or the present imam, descended from the Alid line of Shi'i Isma'ili imams. Within this sphere of Isma'ili religiosity, Sultan Muhammad Shah's authority rested not on the values and codes of the colonial public domain, but rather, a private realm of vernacular devotion and religious practice. This seeming paradox of Aga Khan III as a "modern" public leader of reform, on the one hand, and divine imam, on the other, in many ways parallels what Partha Chatterjee has argued about many Indian nationalists, who moved between secular domains of the state and religious domains of culture to consolidate their anticolonial agenda in the nationalist period. Similar to Indian nationalists, Sultan Muhammad Shah "fought relentlessly to erase the marks of colonial difference" by engaging in the public sphere with speeches campaigning against sectarianism within Islam, purdah, and Muslim backwardness. At the same time, his assertion as the community's "hazar imam" allowed him to occupy a position as a veritable sovereign of the Isma'ilis, which was undoubtedly "premised upon a difference between the cultures of the colonizer and the colonized."[5] The difference, however, is that Hindu nationalist ideology incorporated all Indians and drew from the domain of (Hindu)

Indian culture to fight colonial state rule. The Aga Khan was a representative of Indian Muslims who prioritized the minority Muslim community over Indian national identity and supported continuing colonial rule. His position, I contend, ought to be understood as a response to the pressures exerted on minority groups by nationalism and its colonial legacy.[6]

Sultan Muhammad Shah, like his grandfather, encountered resistance to his authority as imam from Khoja reformers. However, the opposition he faced was surmountable, as the legitimacy of the Aga Khan lineage had been officially sanctioned for almost fifty years. Aga Khan III was able to work from and continue to build upon the conditions through which Isma'ili sectarian identity was established in 1866. This chapter focuses on the forms of reorganization that took place within the sphere of Isma'ili religious practice during Sultan Muhammad Shah's imamate, with specific attention to how the Aga Khan's directive to codify a canon of Isma'ili *ginans* in print helped institutionalize his theological vision for Isma'ili community. Most significantly, for the first time, the Aga Khan was inscribed as messianic sovereign into the canonized poetry. I analyze this new formulation of messianism to illustrate, first, the ways in which Isma'ili devotion was reconfigured with Sultan Muhammad Shah as the centralized object of reverence, and second, how "dissonant" practices of Islam enjoined in the Satpanth idea of religion represent the older precolonial formations of religiosity that are occluded by the secular discourse of religious identity in the modern period.

Cooperative Muslim as Secular Value

First published in 1871, W. W. Hunter's book *The Indian Musulmans* was written, according to the publisher's note, as an "apologia by Sir William Hunter to the question mooted by Lord Mayo: 'Are the Indian Musulmans bound by their Religion to rebel against the Queen?'"[7] Herein, Hunter describes Indian Muslims as a group who have, since "Mughal decline," held "aloof" from society. This aloofness, combined with what Hunter describes as "the Muslim duty of rebellion" that is "fully prescribed by Muhammadan Law," distinguishes "dangerous" Muslims from Hindus:

> The Musulmans of India, are, and have been for many years, a source of chronic danger to the British Power in India. For some reason or other they have held aloof from our system, and the changes in which more flexible Hindus have cheerfully acquiesced, are regarded by them as deep personal wrongs.[8]

Almost a century later, in *The Discovery of India*, Jawaharlal Nehru discussed the subject of Indian Muslims in a similar manner: "Since British rule came to India, Moslems have produced few outstanding figures of the modern type. They have produced some remarkable men, but as a rule, these represented the continuation of the old culture and tradition and did not easily fit in with modern developments."[8] One of these "remarkable men" Nehru describes later in his book is the famous nineteenth-century Muslim reformer Syed Ahmad Khan:

> After the Mutiny, the Indian Moslems had hesitated which way to turn. Sir Syed Ahmad Khan played an important part. He was convinced that he could only raise the Moslems through co-operation with the British authorities. He was anxious to make them accept English education and draw them out of their conservative shells. . . . Sir Syed was an ardent reformer and he wanted to reconcile modern scientific thought in Islam. . . . He pointed out the basic similarities between Islam and Christianity. He attacked purdah, the seclusion of women, among the Moslems. He was opposed to any allegiance to the Turkish khalifat. Above all, he was anxious to push a new type of education.[9]

Hunter's description of Muslims as rebellious and dangerous can no doubt be traced to the colonial state's anxieties about governance and the question native subjects' loyalty to the British Crown post-1857. Although Nehru's account about the dearth of "modern type" Muslims is situated in the later context of the nationalist struggle, his position on the political behavior of Muslims is similar to Hunter's. Both Hunter and Nehru contend that Muslims are incapable of carrying out their duties as citizens. According to Hunter, Muslims have either rebelled against or held aloof from society, and from Nehru's perspective, Muslims have been locked up in their "conservative shells." In this passage, however, Nehru pinpoints Syed Ahmad Khan as an exception to and exemplary guide for Indian Muslims. Nehru describes Syed Ahmad Khan as leading the Muslim community in a socially engaged and politically moderate direction. In underscoring both the ecumenical and modernizing projects of Syed Ahmad Khan's vision for reform, it is clear that the Nehruvian conception of nationalism relies on the necessity for Muslims to be secular—educated, active in public life, and willing to cast aside "backward" religious practices.

Sultan Muhammad Shah and Muslim Reform

Sultan Muhammad Shah's political career as a Muslim leader and reformer was launched shortly after his victory in a high-profile court case. In 1908, Haji Bibi, the widowed daughter of Aga Jhangi Shah (an uncle of Sultan Muhammad Shah), claimed a share of the property left by Aga Khan I, arguing that offerings made to the Aga Khan were gifted not exclusively to him but rather to the entire family of the Aga Khan. Once again the debate in the trial was argued in terms of religious identity. This time, the plaintiff claimed that the Aga Khan and his family were Ithna Ashari Shi'i, and the defense argued that they were Shi'i Imami Isma'ili (the sectarian identity decided in 1866). In what became known as the Haji Bibi Case of 1908, Justice Russell ruled against the plaintiff, confirming Sultan Muhammad Shah's exclusive rights to the estate of his grandfather and to the offerings made to him by his followers.[1]

Exactly a decade after the Haji Bibi Case, in 1918, Sultan Muhammad Shah wrote a Memorandum about the British Empire as 'the greatest Muslim power in the world' to 'protect Islam in Central Asia,' and published his book, *India in Transition*, where he outlined the contours of his religio-political pan-Islamism.[2] Sultan Muhammad Shah, like Syed Ahmad Khan, promulgated the importance of Western secular values for Indian Muslims. One topic about which he gave many public addresses and wrote at length in papers to the Muslim community was education, which, in the following excerpt from his "Presidential Address to the All India Muhammadan Educational Conference" in 1902, he discusses in relation to a series of larger concerns:

> That you have attended this Conference at all, in spite of all these splendid attractions, is due I believe, to the fact that though education is our theme we are deliberating upon something more important than the suitability of this or that textbook, or this or that course of study. We are, if I understand the purpose of this Conference aright, considering what in modern times are the ideals we must hold before our people and the paths by which they attain them; and upon the right answer to these questions depends no trifling matter, but nothing less than the future of Indian Moslems. . . . We are undertaking a formidable task when we attempt to correct and remodel the ideals of our people. But for the task before us, we Indian Mussulmans possess many advantages: we have the advantage of living under a Government which administers justice evenly between rich and poor and between persons of different creeds and classes.[3]

This speech begins with the point that although Muslims have the "advantage" of living under British rule, they have not availed themselves of the requisite opportunities for progress, the first and foremost being education. Sultan Muhammad Shah elaborates on this point later in the speech, claiming that many *madrassahs* continue to impart "parrot-like teaching of the Koran," and that only a few Muslims have taken up the opportunity of British education.[4] Following Syed Ahmad Khan's work in promoting Western education, he laments, "Throughout the whole length

and breadth of India, how many national schools are there in existence which educate Moslem boys and girls in their faith, and at the same time in modern secular science?"[13] Sultan Muhammad Shah connects this problem of education among Muslims to their "apathy" towards progress in civil society—a disposition that he attributes to Muslims' "futile laments over the loss of political power."[14] He explains further, "Now that general liberty is given to all, the monopoly, or even a desire for the monopoly, of political power is both immoral and of no benefit."[15] Instead, he encourages Muslims to work within the structure of British rule, to strive towards "industrial and financial pre-eminence" even though, thus far, Muslims "have neglected industry and commerce, just as we have neglected every other opportunity of progress."[16] Similar to Nehru's description of Syed Ahmad Khan's efforts in drawing Muslims out of their "conservative shells," Sultan Muhammad Shah's call for Muslims to relinquish aspirations for political power and instead participate in civil society is also part of a larger agenda of promoting a progressive Islam: "It is to this class in India that I appeal and desire most earnestly to impress upon them my conviction that, if they continue in their present attitude of aloofness, it means the certain extinction of Islam, at least as a world-wide religion."[17]

Sultan Muhammad Shah was convinced that Muslims were overcome by inertia, which he traced to excessive ritualism. In order to progress or what he called the "attempt to correct and remodel the ideals of our people," he found it necessary to put an end to what he saw as undue preoccupation with "prayer and pilgrimage."[18] Pilgrimage and celebrations of martyrdoms were events that "only help to keep alive those sectarian differences which are one of the misfortunes of Islam."[19] He believed that Muslims ought to emulate the behavior of the Prophet and early caliphs instead. These figures were not only exemplary models of piety, but also political role models, as he claimed that "the example of the Prophet and of Abu Bakr and Omar and Ali should convince these pious people that the first duty of a Moslem is to give his time to the service of his nation and not merely to silent prayers."[20]

Although Sultan Muhammad Shah did not write extensively about the Prophet as did Sayid Ahmad Khan and Ameer Ali, he held to the opinion that the Prophet was the ultimate paradigm of religious and secular virtue, as embodying divine grace, on the one hand, and having brought civilization to the people, on the other hand.[21] Similar to his understanding of prophecy, Sultan Muhammad Shah found both religious and secular relevance in the Qur'an. He claimed that nature (in terms of natural phenomena as well as order and harmony) was testimony to divine perfection and proof of the existence of God and, at the same time, believed the Qur'an

offered practical guidance in the everyday world, arguing, for example, that the text's injunctions improved the status of women and affirmed free will over fatalism. The Qur'an was inherently rational, for Sultan Muhammad Shah repeatedly stated that religion could not exist without reason (*aql*).[22]

In terms of issues such as education, the role of women, the primacy of the Qur'an, and economic progress, the Aga Khan assumed a somewhat standard Muslim reformist, or what is more accurately labeled as a modernist position, shared by many of the key Muslim political and religious thinkers of the mid-nineteenth and mid-twentieth centuries.[23] However, unlike many of his reformist/modernist counterparts in the Muslim world, his religious modernism was neither anticolonial nor nationalist. Sultan Muhammad Shah provided outright support for British rule and was one of the pioneers of the single most factious project to the Indian nationalists: the campaign for separate electorates for Muslims.

Sultan Muhammad Shah and Minority Separatism

Muslims were first analyzed as an aggregate in India starting in the mid-nineteenth century.[24] During this period, ethnographies about caste and religious groups were codified through the law and the census, thereby marking the first juncture at which the subject of identity was taken up as a colonial state project.[25] The second transformative moment for Muslim identity in Indian history, "enabled by the census figures," was the period in which Muslims called for separate electorates.[26] During the early 1900s, Muslim leaders began to address issues such as the growing inertia and marginalization of Muslim voices in Indian society. As a result, a group of leaders formed an organization called the Mohammadan Political Association, which discussed political issues at stake for Muslims, namely fear of Hindu power, loyalty to British rule, and the great need for separate Muslim representation.[27] As this organization grew in numbers and consolidated its agenda, it developed into the Simla Deputation, consisting of seventy representatives, who made their case to Viceroy Minto for the recognition and representation of Muslims as a community in the electoral system. As facilitator of the deputation, the Aga Khan successfully negotiated the concerns of the deputation with the British.[30] What followed from the Simla delegation were the Morley-Minto reforms[31] and, finally, the creation of the All India Muslim League, with the Aga Khan elected as its first president.

Sultan Muhammad Shah's interest in reform was not exclusively a social project. His involvement in the Simla Deputation and establishment of the

Muslim League reveal a commitment to a much broader political agenda that worked for separate representation for Muslims both on local bodies and legislative councils, which essentially advocated for the right to vote for one's own representatives. In this way, Sultan Muhammad Shah's positions on education, overcoming "aloofness," and participating in civic life were fostered to the ends of cultivating a minority position that did not seek to interfere in questioning British rule in India.[12] Sultan Muhammad Shah's vision for reform, although sharing (or adopting) a similar structural and social vision as Syed Ahmad Khan, was ultimately taken to a straightforwardly communitarian end: the formation of the Muslim League.

The early scholars of communalism argued that there was a "direct line of development from Muslim 'communalism,' to 'separatism,' to Pakistan's creation."[13] Francis Robinson ascribed the origins of communalism, from which Muslim leaders took their lead in politics, to long-standing differences between Hindus and Muslims,[14] and Paul Brass specifically located the problem with elite politics, whereby Muslim elites manipulated religious symbols to protect their own power.[15] These positions have been called into question by scholars such as Ayesha Jalal, Vazira Zamindar, and Yasmin Khan—all of whom have shown how Partition was not a clean or linear development from communalism that both Indian and Pakistan national histories would claim, but the work of two main political parties, Congress and the Muslim League.[16] Although it is important to think about how Sultan Muhammad Shah played a specific role in elite politics, promoting Muslim separatism and opposition between Hindus and Muslims, here I am specifically interested in the ways in which the idea of pan-Muslim unity invoked by elite leadership consolidated the minority position. In this regard, I drawn on Aamir Mufti's point that the different kinds of identitarian projects—communalism or separatism—obfuscate the larger issue at stake, namely the ways in which nationalism itself created the "process of minoritization, the pressures exerted on language, literature, culture and identity in the process of becoming minoritized."[17] Within the Indian nationalist context, the minority position took shape and represented itself in response to the majoritarian secular nationalist imaginary. The Aga Khan's speeches reveal how his campaign for pan-Muslim unity and representation relied upon the Nehruvian "grammar" of the secular.[18] The Aga Khan's conception of Muslim unity relied upon an understanding that the "Muslim" ought to embrace secular values, such as progress, education, and relinquish notions of difference within the tradition itself (as the Aga Khan himself states, "Sectarian differences … are one of the misfortunes of Islam"). This notion of "secular-as-modern," of course, is nothing new in the history of Muslim reform leadership.

What I wish to highlight is how the idea of the secular necessitates an effacement of the diversity and heterogeneity of Islamic practices, which ultimately points to the epistemic contours of the secular at work in the project of pan-Muslim unity. This specific understanding of the secular is illuminated when analyzed in tandem with "opposing" expressions of secularity, which I locate in Satpanth Islam.[19]

Dasavatār and the *Ginān*s post-1866

The Aga Khan Case settled the issue of Isma'ili identity legally. However, Aga Khan I did not implement any institutional changes for the newly defined Isma'ili community, nor did his son, Ali Shah (1881–1885), whose imamate was too brief to initiate any substantive endeavors. The true visionary was Sultan Muhammad Shah, who outlined parameters of Isma'ili identity both institutionally and discursively. There were certainly connections between his public role and support for Muslim progress and his vision for the Isma'ili community. His "Neo-Ismailism" emphasized a modernist paradigm of Islam that could speak to contemporaneous political and social challenges. He stressed the importance of social-welfare programs, the removal of purdah, and education for all Isma'ilis.[20]

There were, however, significant inconsistencies between his secular public persona and his private endeavors, which can be seen in the content of his farmans and the changes he made to the *ginān*s. The farman genre allowed the Aga Khan to offer information about the identity of the community, as well as convey the necessary injunctions about religious practice, as illustrated in the following excerpt from one of his farmans dated to 1899:

> It is not proper to read Hindu things into your ilm. When you were Hindus, at that time, Pir Sadr al Din showed you the way. That time is gone. Now, recite the praise of Mawla Ali and his progeny, the Imams of the time. Recite the Praise of the 'Hazar Imam.' Now give up the nine 'avataras.' Recite the praise of our forefathers in the Dasamo Avatara.[21]

In this directive, Sultan Muhammad Shah invokes two points that were legitimized as historical facts in 1866: first, that the succession of Isma'ili imams can be traced from Ali to the Aga Khans, and second, that Pir Sadruddin converted the Khojas. Sultan Muhammad Shah's injunction builds upon the terms of argument discussed in the 1866 outcome. Whereas in 1866, *Dasavatār* provided textual justification for the argument that Khojas were Hindu converts to Islam, here Sultan Muhammad Shah offers an

interpretation of the text that legitimizes his own authority. To this end, he stresses the importance of relinquishing a "Hindu" past. The narrative about Ismailis as Hindu converts and the injunction to forget preconvert religiosity were necessary for the validation of his own position as imam. That which is "Hindu" cannot be adapted or make commensurate with his authority as imam, and so, according to this logic (originally deployed by the colonial court), the stories of the first nine avatars of *Dasavatār* are relegated to a past that is no longer relevant to the present state of the Isma'ili community.

It is interesting to note that Sultan Muhammad Shah did not dismiss *Dasavatār* altogether nor deny the relevance of the text. He rather called upon the Isma'ili community to concentrate on the "Dasamo Avatar," the tenth portion of the poem that, in 1866, was explained as Shi'i in orientation. Sultan Muhammad Shah interpreted *Dasavatār* as divided text, just like Arnould, but for Sultan Muhammad Shah, this division served a new function: as a means to remind the devotee that the Aga Khans were the descendants of the subject of the *Dasamo Avatār*, Imam Ali, and that Sultan Muhammad Shah was the "hazar imam," descended through the Alid line of Isma'ili imams.

One of the ways in which Sultan Muhammad Shah institutionalized devotion to the Isma'ili imams was through the reconfiguration of the Isma'ili canonical prayer, known as the *du'a*. In the period prior to the 1930s, the *du'a* addressed the ten avatars, but sometime in the late 1930s, the avatars were substituted with a list of Isma'ili imams.[42] In addition to changing the *du'a*, the Aga Khan centralized the authority of the imam over and against the older structure of the Khoja *jamat*. The Khoja *jamat* was organized around the leadership of the *mukhi* and the *kamaria*, respected elders of the community, normally selected by the caste. After 1905, the Aga Khan created a new administrative structure, the "Shia Imami Isma'ili Councils," whose members were appointed directly by the Aga Khan. The new councils arbitrated all disputes and *jamat* affairs, thus undermining the authority of older positions of caste leadership. Furthermore, in 1910, the Aga Khan drafted an official document called the "Shi'ah Imami Ismaili Constitution," which all members of the Khoja *jamat* were obliged to abide by and through which all community issues were negotiated.[43]

The writings of "seceders" from the Isma'ili community describe some of the new rules Sultan Muhammad Shah codified within the Isma'ili community, albeit from an antagonistic perspective. In 1927 and 1954, a group identifying themselves as "Khoja reformers" published documents in the genre of an "open letter" directed to the Aga Khan (Sultan Muhammad Shah) as well as Sultan Muhammad Shah's son, Ali Soloman Khan. These letters were all composed by the same author, Karim Goolam Ali,

"Secretary of the Khoja Reformers' Society," who was based in Karachi. This group expressed a similar kind of opposition to the Aga Khan's authority as did the *dhettas* in the 1860s, and the letters address many of the same issues that appeared in the 1864 collection, *A Voice from India*, such as allegations that the Aga Khan squandered community money and consciously prevented Khojas from access to Western education. Similar to the incidents narrated in the 1864 collection of articles, here too the fear and power of the Aga Khan are explicated in great detail. One letter dated to 1927 opens with the point that writing the letter itself was a risky undertaking. "Allow us, your highness, at the outset to state that the sole reason for taking this dangerous course is the most deplorable condition of our brethren."[44] The author describes the letter as a "dangerous course," because the reformers feared an attack on one of the members of their group. Similar to the events recounted in 1864, this letter narrates a series of incidents in Karachi where Khoja reformers who spoke publicly about their grievances against the Aga Khan were stabbed and attacked for "holding reformist views."[45]

While many of the reformists' complaints against Sultan Muhammad Shah were similar to those against his grandfather Hasan Ali Shah—the Aga Khans's mishandling of money, the accusation that he promoted ignorance among his followers, and general fear of the Aga Khans's power—the articles that were collected in *A Voice from India* collection were directed to the state. The latter group of reformists directed their grievances to the Aga Khan himself, as well as his son, and their concerns focused specifically on the new changes in Isma'ili beliefs and practices the that Aga Khan dictated. Whereas the first Aga Khan did not engage in any public written rebuttal to the reformers, Sultan Muhammad Shah addressed what he saw as the fundamental problem with the reformist position. In his *Memoirs*, he explained his position against the reformists as the following.

> Our religion is our religion, you either believe in it or you do not. You can leave a faith but you cannot, if you do not accept its tenets, remain within it and claim to "reform it." You can abandon those tenets, but you cannot try to change them and still protest that you belong to the particular sect that holds them. Many people have left the Ismaili faith, just as others have joined it throughout the ages. About a score of people out of many millions—a small group in Karachi and India—pretended to be Ismailis but called themselves "reformers." The true Ismailis immediately excommunicated them.[46]

The Aga Khan's central contention against the reformist position is that it attempts to alter the terms of Isma'ili teachings and practices. While the reformist writings do not explicitly make this claim, it is apparent that they criticize Isma'ili practices from an orthodox or Sunni perspective.

The reformers believed that Isma'ilis were not truly Muslim because they did not observe rituals such as fasting, hajj, and following the "holy Koran."[47] The reformists' letters focused on promoting a kind of "purified" Islam, as well as other reformist values, such as the importance of education and criticisms of ritual. In terms of the latter, the ritual of paying tributes to the Aga Khan received the most extensive condemnation because, they claimed, that the Aga Khan exploited his devotees through this practice. In that same letter, the author contends that the Aga Khan manipulated his devotees into offering exorbitant sums of money to the imam: "Our poor brethren are made to pay about fifty percent of their income in various shapes to God himself in the person of your highness."[48] The letter then explains how from Karachi there was a regular contribution of 20,000 rupees per month, and how apparently, in one visit alone, sometime in 1920, the Aga Khan took away fifteen lakhs of rupees after a stay of twenty-six days.[49] This discussion of money comes back to the original point about education, arguing that there was a direct correlation between the extravagance of the Aga Khan's lifestyle and the concomitant decline of the standard of education among the Khoja community.[50]

What distinguishes this particular set of writings from those of the reformers in 1864 is their opposition to the new terms of practice commissioned by Sultan Muhammad Shah as well as his vision for the structure of the community. According to Goolam Ali, the new set of rules and the councils were established to tighten Sultan Muhammad Shah's grip on the Isma'ili community."[51] While Goolam Ali's letter does not outline the exhaustive list of rules established by the Shia Imami Councils, the letter provides a few specific examples. The author explains that all religious ceremonies performed in the *jamat khana* were associated with the payment of money. He lists several of the rules, such as the following, which states: "According to the customs of the Shia Imami Religion, each and every person, whether rich or poor, shall positively pay Sarkar Saheb . . . every new Moon night."[52] And rule number seven explains, "Any person who wants to make dharam (voluntary gift), 'That,' 'Sufro,' or other Dharam, he shall make cash payment at the time."[53] Paying tributes was a central Satpanth practice. In 1866, the colonial court concluded, on the basis of the records of payments made by Khojas to the Aga Khan in the name of "Sarkar" and "Saheb," that the Khoja community property and trust belonged to the Aga Khan. According to Goolam Ali, the new council rules established during the time of Sultan Muhammad Shah's imamate, made it explicit that all payment of tributes be directed to the Aga Khan.[54]

Exclusive devotion to the Aga Khan finds expression in the *ginān* poems that were commissioned for print during Sultan Muhammad Shah's

imamate. With the introduction of print technology into the self-documentation of the Isma'ili community in 1900, Aga Khan III mandated initiatives in the direction of canon formation—the first undertaken by members of the Isma'ili community itself. The *gināns* were first collected with the purpose of producing an authoritative canon during the imamate of Aga Khan II, but Aga Khan III furthered this process extensively through his officially appointed publisher Lalji Devraj. Devraj's initiatives included an exhaustive search and compilation of *ginān* manuscripts, in which some thirty-five hundred manuscripts were supposedly destroyed, and the production of a series of five volumes (each containing one hundred *gināns*) printed at the Khoja community's own press, Khoja Sindhi Press.[55] This first official canon was marked by a series of changes to the poems, such as the discarding of "Hindu" names (Hari, Krishna, etc.), the insertion of Islamic ones, and most notably, the addition of new *gināns* that address Aga Khan III as the primary object of devotion.

Consider the following *ginān*, which depicts a ritual known as "thad sufro," where a *thal*, or plate of food, is offered. In the poem, Sultan Muhammad Shah is the unambiguous recipient of this offering.

[illegible] Hymn"

O Ali, in the fair assembly gloriously adorned, with carpets spread upon the floor, Sultan Muhammad Shah the Lord has ascended the throne
Blessed be your rule today! Blessed be your rule, o light of Ali's eyes!
Blessed be your rule, o Lord, descendant of the Prophet! Blessed be your rule today!
O Ali, to gain vision of you, Lord, your entire Indian community has come
They duly present their offerings, Lord, devoting their lives to you
O Ali, from the first day your fortune has bestowed greatness upon you
Lord, from the lips of Lord Ali Shah, there issued the words: Sultan Muhammad Shah is the Lord
O Ali, to call you 'Lord' is your due, for you bear the signs of noble fortune on your brow. At this young age your rank is lofty, betokening your greatness
O Ali, blessed be your royal throne and umbrella, O beloved descendant of the Lady Zahra. Your power comes from the father of Lord Hasan, enhancing your glory
O Ali, at the news of your coronation, light pours down from heaven. With plates of pearls in their hands, the houris shower offerings upon the Lord.
O, Ali, when the believers in the guest-house celebrate this occasion as at Id, they recite the Shamsi prayer and experience the delights of spiritual enlightenment
O Ali, to offer you his congratulations, this Sayyid submits his humble prayer: may the Lord of Najaf be your protector, and may your enemies be destroyed![57]

This *ginān* from the first official canon, "Enthronement Hymn," illustrates the ways in which Sultan Muhammad Shah was able to officially inscribe his position as an object of devotion. "Enthronement Hymn" deploys familiar concepts and themes from the tradition of *ginān* poetry, such as the importance of a community of devotees and the exaltation of and devotion to an imam. In this account of the coronation event the community of devotees is described as presenting offerings *(bhāl)* and bestowing devotion to Sultan Muhammad Shah. What distinguishes this canonized poem from the earlier *ginān*s is the insertion of his official status as divine leader of the community. In this poem, the Aga Khan's authority is established through a skillful maneuvering of epithets, in which two objects of devotion are placed side by side: Sultan Muhammad Shah and Ali, the cousin and son-in-law of the Prophet. In the opening verses, for example, it is unclear which figure is equated with "descendant of the Prophet": "O Ali, in the fair assembly gloriously adorned, with carpets spread upon the floor, Sultan Muhammad Shah the Lord has ascended the throne. Blessed be your rule today! Blessed be your rule, O light of Ali's eyes! Blessed be your rule, O Lord, descendant of the Prophet! Blessed be your rule today!"

In the set of verses that follow, Ali and Sultan Muhammad Shah are elided and rendered indistinguishable: "Lord, from the lips of Lord Ali Shah, there issued the words: 'Sultan Muhammad Shah is the Lord.'" By having Sultan Muhammad Shah's divinity pronounced by Ali himself, the historical event of Sultan Muhammad Shah's "coronation" is authorized and made continuous within a prior tradition of Shi'i devotion. All "un-Islamic" aspects of religious expression are expunged, and Isma'ili religiosity is framed exclusively through the terms of Shi'i devotion.

The representation of the Isma'ili Muslim community in this *ginān* is at odds with the "Muslim" whom Sultan Muhammad Shah addresses in his public speeches. This vision of the Isma'ili community in "Enthronement Hymn" is hierarchical: the Aga Khan is a divine figure positioned as an object of devotion above the community of devotees, as opposed to his secular self-representation in the public sphere, where the Aga Khan speaks as an equal to every other Muslim. Where did this hierarchical structure come from, and how was it possible for Sultan Muhammad Shah to assume this position of reverence within this hierarchy? Remember that Justice Arnould divided *Dasavatār* into Hindu and Muslim sections, arguing that the tenth chapter focused on Ali, the first Shi'i imam. According to the farman discussed above, Sultan Muhammad Shah summoned his devotees to forget the first nine avatars, follow the tenth, and the subsequent line of Isma'ili imams. By declaring himself as the "hazar imam,"

the final living imam in the line of Isma'ili imams, he provided a new theological link between the subject of *Dasamo Avatār*, Imam Ali, and himself. "Enthronement Hymn" invokes these new coordinates of devotion. Only here, the first and last of the imams—Ali and Sultan Muhammad Shah—are the exclusive players, upstaging and occluding all imams in between.

Sultan Muhammad Shah's "coronation" is sanctioned through the term "takht," which is translated as throne. Messianic notions of arrival associated with the idea of the "takht"—those attributed to Sultan Muhammad Shah's coronation in "Enthronement Hymn"—are imbricated, in the precanonized *ginān* poetic tradition, within a Vaishnava/Shi'i idiom. This idea of the "takht" allows us to understand the ways in which the Aga Khan was able to work from Satpanth ideas in order to assert his claim as messianic sovereign. I will return to my explanation of how "takht" is reconstellated in this poem, but let me first provide a brief discussion of how this problem of messianic fulfillment finds a related expression in a recent commentary on Judeo-Christian messianism.

"Takht" and Messianic Time

In his book *The Time That Remains*, Giorgio Agamben explains that over two thousand years of translation and commentary, the Christian church has expunged all messianic ideas from Paul's letters, the canonical messianic texts of Christianity.[67] He claims that both "Church" and "Synagogue" are complicit in relegating Paul to the role as founder of Christianity because both are invested in suppressing the Jewish-messianic perspective from which Paul writes his letters.[68] Following the ideas of Jacob Taubes, Agamben attempts to redress the ways in which the Christian church has written out the concept of the Messiah in Paul's letters. In contradistinction to the Christian church's interpretation of Paul's message, Agamben argues that the Messiah cannot simply be equated with the historical figure of Jesus. Messianic salvation, rather, is a much broader concept that is given significance not in a human incarnation but in a kind of temporal exigency. "Messianic time," or what he explains as "to live in the Messiah," is not belief in Jesus as the fulfillment of messianism but the exceptional and revolutionary critique of the law *(nomos)*. Agamben interprets the idea of "remaining time" in Paul's letters as the suspension of all social conditions and the undoing of any kind of appropriation or "juridical/factical" identity.[69] As he illustrates with his reading of the term *kletos* (calling), for example, all worldly conditions are transformed with the immediacy of "the time that remains." In this way, one's *kletos*, or

calling, in the remaining time necessitates a "revocation" of one's condition from top down, "an urgency that works it from within and hollows it out, nullifying it in the very gesture of maintaining and dwelling in it."[61]

In *Dasavatār*, the "takht" is introduced when the tenth avatar prepares to confront the evil demon, for only after the tenth avatar rises from occultation does he sit on a decorated "takht," or throne. Seating himself on the throne marks the moment in which the Shah takes his sword and slays the entire army of the demon, thus completing the messianic mission and establishing justice. This episode associated with the "takht" transpires in the second half of the poem. Prior to this, the text explains Satpanth teachings through the conversation between the messenger Pir Shams and the demon Kalingo's wife, Queen Suraja. Pir Shams conveys this message of the Satpanth through the authority of the classical Sanskrit ritual texts, the Vedas, as well as cyclical ideas of time *(yugas)* and the tradition of divine incarnations *(avatars)*.

Where Queen Suraja is sitting, at the very moment assuming the form of a parrot, Pir Shams speaks
Listen, Queen Suraja, to the Atharva Veda, and the knowledge of Brahman, so that later you may attain a place in the eternal abode
Today, O Queen, you have come to the royal threshold of the house of the demon, but now your life is going to be wasted.
On hearing such words, the queen was amazed.
The queen went and touched the feet of Pir Shams, who was in the form of a parrot
Then Pir Shams spoke the truth
Listen, Queen Suraja, to the tale of the Atharva Veda
Queen, in the Krita era, the Rig Veda was current
Then the devotee Prahlada attained liberation with five krores of beings.
In that era Hari assumed four forms, the deva, the Shah himself destroyed four demons.
Queen, know that in the second Treta era, the Yajur Veda was current
Then the deva rescued the devotee Harishchandra with seven crores of beings.
In that era, the Shah himself destroyed three demons.
Queen, know the third era, to be Dvapara, when the Sama Veda was the basis of authority
The Pandavas were rescued with nine crores of beings. In that era, the deva, the Shah himself, destroyed two demons. Then King Yudhisthira achieved liberation with nine crores—they attained a place in the eternal abode
Today, in the Kali era, the place of Hari is in the Atharva Veda.
So, today, in the Kali era, Hari is the tenth incarnation.
That deva, the lord Murari, has assumed the Nakalaki incarnation. He will kill your husband, O Lady.[62]

Listen, Queen Suraja, so Pir Shams speaks his thought
Today in this era, understand the Satpanth as truth.
So, Queen, without the Satpanth no one has attained knowledge.
Therefore, O Queen, without the true guru there is no salvation.
Queen, in this era, worship the Satpanth as true
Then only, Queen Suraja, you will cross over safely.
Queen, follow the Satpanth secretly, so that the demon may not know.[63]

Upon hearing about Satpanth teaching from Shams, the queen responds with full comprehension of his message:

Lord, whatever service was left undone by us in our previous life
For that reason, we have truly come to the house of the demon.[64]
Lord, our birth was in that house
But now, due to the guide, the true guru, we have become eternal.[65]

Pir Shams explains how the tenth avatar will confront and destroy the evil demon. Queen Suraja conveys an understanding of her station in life as the demon Kalingo's wife through the philosophy of *karma*. She realizes that escape from her condition, specifically the destructive state of immortality *(amara)*, has become a possibility through the Satpanth teaching imparted by the pir. What we find here resonates with what Agamben conveys about messianic time: similar to what Agamben describes as messianic "revocation," the Satpanth teaching of *Dasavatār* operates as a kind of "hollowing out" of older Indic ideas. Post-Vedic concepts such as *karma* and *mukti* (liberation) are given new meaning and exigency with the expectation of the messiah's arrival. When the queen responds to this new teaching, she makes the point that her current station in life as married to the evil demon will be nullified and revoked upon her acceptance of the Satpanth. The Satpanth is thus the means through which she is able to reverse her present condition and participate in the knowledge and expectation of the messianic event. The revocation and "hollowing" out of one's condition that is made possible through the expectation of the messianic event points to the ways in which Agamben's idea of messianic time can be mapped upon the temporal structure of *Dasavatār*.[66]

Agamben supports his point about Paul's messianic thought with an argument about the vernacular medium of expression. He explains that Paul belongs to a Jewish Diaspora community that "thinks and speaks in Greek in precisely the same manner that Sephardim would speak Ladino (or Judeo-Spanish) and the Ashkenzi Yiddish."[67] He describes Paul's Greek as "Yiddish" or what he also explains as a "minor language," a quintessentially (diasporic) "jargon." Agamben claims that the distinctive medium of Paul's poetic vernacular Greek allows for the exceptional message of remaining time in the letter to the Romans. I would argue

something slightly different with the *gināns* in terms of language, however. There is nothing exceptional, "minor," or "jargonish" about the *ginans*. The formations of messianic Islam in the *ginān* poetic tradition ought to be understood not as any kind of exceptional message, but rather part of a larger phenomenon about Islam's expansion. On the subcontinent, this kind of expansion took place in the medieval/early-modern context, shifting the Indic religious landscape with new forms of vernacular literary and religious expression. As Pollock has argued, the rise of the vernacular in South Asia was made against the background of Sanskrit and deeply conditioned by Sanskrit literary culture. As part of a conscious decision to reshape the boundaries of their cultural universe, the vernacular became the medium through which writers put cosmopolitan hieratic languages such as Sanskrit to new use.[67]

The messianic message of the *ginān* poetic tradition ultimately reworks Sanskrit classical forms and ideas, giving them new meaning and significance in the vernacular. For instance, the Atharva Veda, as it appears in *Dasavatār*, does not represent the Vedic text itself. From the classical Sanskrit perspective, the Atharva Veda is one of four ritual texts, with no greater authoritative claim over the other three. Here, however, the Atharva Veda is divested from its traditional role as a ritual text, and its significance is reinterpreted by the pir as knowledge of the central forthcoming messianic event: that "Hari" will kill the queen's husband Kalingo. The Atharva Veda is a central concept of the Satpanth that, on the one hand, conceptually relies on Sanskrit but, at the same time, demonstrates a kind of recalcitrance towards the conventions and parameters of Sanskritic classical forms and linguistic norms. In this way the vernacular enables an older idea to be infused with a new meaning.

Another classical Sanskritic concept, *samsara*, takes on a new association in its vernacular form. The closing lines of the *Dasamo Avatar* state that those who follow the words of the *Dasavatār* will be spared from the cycle of reincarnation *(samsara)* and will avoid the fire of the great day *(mahadin)*.[68] In the Judeo-Christian context, eschatology is essentially a linear concept of time,[70] but here, the newly emergent vernacular allows us to see the mixed ways of imagining religious ideas and practices, where the cyclical *samsara* is paired with the linear Qur'anic time, which culminates in the Judgment Day. This simultaneity of samsara/mahadin provides another example of how *Dasavatār* cannot be relegated to understandings of sect. This logic of "sect" is premised upon a teleological idea of religion, in which "Vaishnava Hindu" components provide a framework through which "Ismaili Islam" is "superadded."[71] Satpanth ideas of eschatology cannot be captured by syncretistic approaches to the text

either, as no single definition or process of commensuration can account for both the cyclical and linear aspects of temporality. These examples from *Dasavatar* illustrate how the vernacular's revaluing of literary forms and figures sets in motion particular ways of imagining community and belonging that are not based upon a restrictive conception of identity. The equity with which both of these ideas are presented in the poem is written out through identitarian readings of the *ginans*.

This identitarian logic activated by the colonial state and assimilated into Isma'ili studies scholarship effaces the poem's pluralistic notions as well as the messianic imaginary of the *ginān* poetic tradition. The ascription of Muhammad Shah's status as messiah in print establishes another identitarian claim over the *ginans*, which in some ways parallels the Christian interpretation of Jesus as the Messiah. Just as the Christian church invests in the figure of Jesus the fulfillment of an earlier tradition of messianic expectation, "Enthronement Hymn" equates the "takht," the symbol of the messiah's anticipated arrival, with the Aga Khan. We can see exactly how this shift takes places when comparing the older *Dasavatār* with the canon-ized "Enthronement Hymn." That which represents the future messianic event in *Dasavatār*—the figure of the "takht"—is reconfigured through Muhammad Shah's "coronation" in the opening verse of "Enthronement Hymn": "O Ali, in the fair assembly gloriously adorned, with carpets spread upon the floor, Sultan Muhammad Shah the Lord has ascended the throne."

The Aga Khan consolidated the Isma'ili religion, first of all, administratively, through canonization, directives and the creation of documents such as Isma'ili Constitution. However, the *ginans* and farmans served as the media through which he defined the terms of religious participation discursively. Take, for example, the following farman which elaborates upon the function as well as the necessity of "Hazar Imam" for the Isma'ilis:

> From time to time, as the circumstances change, some new things come up and fresh issues arise. At different times, new difficulties crop up. The conditions of the world also change. The conditions of the world prevailing thousand of years ago were different than the present times and will radically change in the years to come. There have always been great transformations in the world. It is on account of this that the Imam of the Time is always present to guide you according to the changed times. He commands you to act in a way that suits the current times. My firmans in years to come will be quite different from the present ones. The whole world will change. Therefore you should obey the Firmans of the Imam of the time. As the time change, so do the Firman.[72]

The tone of this farman is similar to his public speeches, as its concerns are very much grounded in the present and focused on guiding his audience in the proper direction. The premise of his speech—to keep up and

adapt to the present conditions—is no different from his message to the wider Muslim community. Its content, however, is specifically addressed to the Isma'ili community. The Aga Khan underscores the importance of adhering to the injunctions of the farmans because, as he explains to his devotees, times are always changing, and his injunctions are suited to the changing times. However, what we know from "Enthronement Hymn" is that the Isma'ili imam of the time is not simply a guide in one's everyday life as this pronouncement claims. His authority is totalizing, which is implicit in the farman's reference to the imam's capability to respond to all conditions, whether past, present, or future. The Aga Khan explains that no matter what the circumstance or time period, the "hazar imam" is able to offer appropriate injunctions to his devotees. This is because, as revealed in the following excerpt from another farman, the Aga Khan understands his role and responsibility as extending far beyond temporal concerns

> Do not at all reflect about the future and do not at all think about whether you shall receive Heaven or Hell in the afterlife. Because all things—heaven and Hell—[to give] are in my hand."

When pairing this farman with "Enthronement Hymn," we see how Sultan Muhammad Shah asserted his position as "hazar imam" within the theological matrix of Isma'ili beliefs and practices that centered on the idea of "messianic time." According to Satpanth teaching, the repercussions of one's actions are tied to one's *karma*, and the "hollowing out" of one's condition and station is only possible through participation in messianic time, that is to say, belief in the expected deliverer. In "Enthronement Hymn," however, the Aga Khan assumed the "takht," thus displacing anticipation of the final avatar's arrival. This new position is corroborated by the Aga Khan's words above: he, not belief in the imminent tenth avatar, determines the course of one's life and afterlife. Whether through changing the literal words of *ginān* poetry, as in the case of "Enthronement Hymn," or through the invocation of ideas and practices that were part of the older ideas of the *ginān* tradition, it is clear that the Isma'ili "hazar imam" successfully supplanted the meaning and significance of Satpanth "messianic time."

Conclusion

This chapter has taken up a discussion of two aspects of Sultan Muhammad Shah's life—his role as secular Muslim political leader and Isma'ili imam. Sultan Muhammad Shah's ideas about Islam were formulated within the colonial and Nehruvian understanding of modern Muslim identity that

held to secular values of modernity, education, and progress. While focusing this reform project in the direction of Muslim separatism and, ultimately, Partition, Sultan Muhammad Shah simultaneously occupied an altogether distinct leadership role among the Isma'ili community. Turning to a study of Sultan Muhammad Shah's imamate, I explained how Sultan Muhammad Shah reorganized the terms of Isma'ili practice through both changes in the Isma'ili social structure as well as ritual practice.

Unlike the nature of his leadership in the public domain—one that was formulated through the values of secular Islam and secular leadership—in the realm of religion, he assumed a divine intercessory role as Isma'ili messianic sovereign. This new position of authority was officially sanctioned through his canonization directives in the early twentieth century. The production of this first canon of *ginans* served to circumscribe the parameters of Isma'ili Islam—which were first outlined in 1866—even further along sectarian lines. As the poem "Enthronement Hymn" reveals, these new terms of Isma'ili devotion were brought in line with primarily Persian Shi'i ideas and configured with Sultan Muhammad Shah as the primary object of devotion.

Print alone, however, was not the only factor that secured his position as messianic sovereign. As I demonstrated with my reading of "takht" in *Dasavatār*, the earlier tradition of Satpanth beliefs and practices that cohered around the idea of "messianic time" provided a theological opening for Sultan Muhammad Shah to assert his divine intercessory authority. It was therefore not solely the medium of print and production of new *gināns* such as "Enthronement Hymn" that created the conditions in which Sultan Muhammad Shah could occupy the seat of the "takht"; messianic fulfillment was made possible by a prior vernacular tradition of messianic expectation as well.

Sultan Muhammad Shah, therefore, was able to secure this role for himself by means of new conceptions of messianism as well as the reworking of old messianic ideas in the *ginān* poetic tradition. The earlier ideas of possibility and expectation that were essential to the future messianic event associated with the signifier "takht" in *Dasavatār* were rearticulated and resignified with Sultan Muhammad Shah as "messiah." In this regard, Sultan Muhammad Shah's new role as messiah parallels what Agamben has described as the Christian appropriation of Jesus. Christianity was institutionalized with the claim that Jesus was the fulfillment of an earlier Jewish conception of "messianic time." Isma'ilism ultimately cohered as a formal religious institution when the centralized object of devotion, Aga Khan, was codified as the messianic fulfillment of Satpanth religiosity.

In the public sphere, Sultan Muhammad Shah's discussions about Muslim education and progress spoke to colonial and reformist projects

of the time. Sultan Muhammad Shah's speeches to the Indian Muslim community illustrate how this specific idea of Islam homogenized and/or erased practices and beliefs that did not adhere to this secular vision. Sultan Muhammad Shah's canonization directives demonstrate, however, that "dissonant" ideas needed to be reordered in the religious domain as well. The *ginans* that were part of the new canon, such as "Enthronement Hymn," reveal how the older and more complex literary and devotional traditions of South Asian Islam were reformulated in response to identitarian exigencies within the Isma'ili community. In this way, both reformist and sectarian claims to identity occlude the mixed and pluralistic formations through which Islam indigenized in South Asia. By turning to discussions of *Dasavatār* from the perspective of messianic expectation and intercessory authority, however, it is possible to recapture an understanding of *Dasavatār* prior to its division, as a religious expression of South Asian Islam that eludes the discourse of Muslim identity in the modern period.

Conclusion

SULTAN MUHAMMAD SHAH'S LEADERSHIP, which spanned the first half of the twentieth century, expressed itself in two distinct and seemingly incompatible forms. In the public sphere, he discussed the importance of pan Muslim unity and secular values such as Western education and development for Indian Muslims. When he spoke exclusively to the Isma'ilis, however, he emphasized imamate devotion, steering the Isma'ili community in the direction of Shi'i Islam. In the previous chapter, I described the tensions between these two modes of rulership adopted by Sultan Muhammad Shah. Here, I would like to reflect on these two positions not so much as paradoxical but rather as instances of two interconnected trends in the history of Islam, reform and accretion.

The public aspect of Sultan Muhammad Shah's leadership style was reformist in nature, and it drew upon novel conceptions of Muslim "identity." Reform refers to that set of institutionalized practices through which Muslims learn to identify with a larger global idea of community, resist participation in non-Muslim rituals, and follow practices which are removed from ancestral locality.[1] As a historical phenomenon, the process of Muslim reform began in the nineteenth century; it coincided with the dissolution of Ottoman, Mughal, and Safavid empires, and the consolidation of British, French, and Dutch rule. There were several key thinkers who provided extensive analyses and discussions about this new reformist Islam. These figures included the Iranian Jamal al-Din Afghani (d. 1897),

the Egyptians Muhammad Abduh (d. 1905), and Rashid Rida (d. 1935), and the Indian Syed Ahmad Khan (d. 1898). These reformers articulated new conceptions of Islam in response to Orientalist ideas of religion, and were also, to some extent, influenced by the thought of Muhammad ibn Abdul Wahhab of Najd, the founder of the so-called Wahhabi movement in the eighteenth century, which sought to purify and restore Islam to its original state.[2]

Beginning in the nineteenth century, both insiders and outsiders began to identify "Islam" with a corporate idea of religion that had a distinct political boundary. The Orientalist Edward Lane was the first person to introduce the term "Islam" into European languages as an explicit equivalent to the Christian idea of religion.[3] Prior to the nineteenth century, debates in Muslim theology centered not on "Islam" but "iman," referring to faith in God, that which was revealed through prophets, and how to define the faithful believer *(mu'min)*. The term "Islam" was invoked in Muslim reformist circles at the same time as or just after it was popularized by European Orientalists.[4] Muslim reformers were deeply interested in finding ways to make Islam compatible with the values of Western modernity. One example of how this Western perspective—and attendant conceptions of modernity—informed the thinking of Muslim thought can be seen in the famous exchange which took place between the European scholar of Islamic studies Ernst Renan and the Muslim reformer Jamal al-Din Afghani at the Sorbonne in 1883. Renan argued that Islam was incompatible with science and philosophy because, as part of the Semite race, Arabs were inherently incapable of critical and philosophical thinking. In his response to Renan, Afghani conceded that conditions in the Islamic world presented obstacles to the development of modern science and progress, but he was not resigned to this state of affairs. He believed that just as the West was gradually transformed into a "civilized" society despite its Christian past, the same would eventually be the case with Muslims.

> If it is true that the Muslim religion is an obstacle to the development of sciences, can one affirm that this obstacle will not disappear someday. How does the Muslim religion differ on this point from other religions. All religions are intolerant each one in its way. The Christian religion seems to advance rapidly on the road of progress and science, whereas Muslim society has not yet freed itself from the tutelage of religion. Realizing, however, that the Christian religion preceded the Muslim religion in the world by many centuries, I cannot keep from hoping that Muhammadan society will succeed someday in breaking its bonds and marching resolutely in the path of civilization after the manner of Western society, for which the Christian faith, despite its rigors and intolerance, was not at all an invincible obstacle. No I cannot admit that this hope be denied to Islam.

Afghani attempts to argue against Renan's racial theories and religious bigotry, but it is apparent that Afghani himself adheres to many of Renan's values and assumptions about the relative backwardness of "Islam" in relation the "West." As Renan's and Afghani's exchanges illustrate, the conception of Islam debated and discussed in Orientalist and reformist circles in the nineteenth century operated on the assumption that Islam is both a discrete civilization and a religion equivalent to Christianity.

Established in the nineteenth century, this conception of Islam as a civilization and religious entity remains prevalent today. Carl Ernst explains the context in which such a shift took place. "The concept of Islam in opposition to the West," Ernst notes, "is just as much a product of European colonialism as it is a Muslim response to that European expansionism."[5] Neo-Orientalists such as Bernard Lewis perpetuate the entrenched attitudes of nineteenth century Orientalists and build their arguments upon the same civilizational discourse. During the 1990s, Bernard Lewis's "The Roots of Muslim Rage," and, later, Samuel Huntington's "The Clash of Civilizations," in their respective ways, elaborated the idea that Islam has repeatedly encountered or rather "clashed" with the West, from the time of the Crusades until today.

All of these perspectives—reformist, Orientalist, and neo Orientalist—are identitarian, which I explained in the Introduction as an idea of religion that is bounded and exclusive, defined by an identity. The Islam that emerged from the nineteenth-century Isma'ili community of India was also identitarian. The colonial court determined that Khoja religious identity was derived from its "original" form as found in Persian Islam. Although the Khojas' leaders used the language of religious identity to argue their case against the Aga Khan, they did not have, at the time of the trial, a consistent and coherent narrative about their religious identity. Justice Arnould provided this narrative in 1866. Arnould constructed the Khojas as a modern political and cultural entity through the exclusive frame of identity.

Muslim identity is in this precise sense a colonial "invented tradition." (The key term here is "identity," for I am arguing that identity was not the lens through which such communities conceived of themselves prior to the nineteenth century.) Compare, for instance, Arnould's decision and narrative about Khojas to Justice Perry's discussions of Khojas in 1847. Perry evaluated the Khojas on the basis of their similarities with groups such as "Parsis, Moguls, Afghans, Israelites, and Christians, who have been long settled in India are seen to have exchanged much of their ancient patrimony of ideas for Hindu modes of thought."[6] Synthesis was the primary framework through which Perry interpreted the Khojas' religious identity

Justice Arnould, however, claimed that Khojas were Muslim in the modern identitarian sense of the word. The definitive claim was that they were "converts" to a Middle Eastern Islam. Arnould established an official narrative about Khojas as converts based on the new corporate logic of Islam that was defined by insiders and outsiders, on the one hand, divisions equivalent to "church" and "sect": Khojas had to be either Hindu or Muslim, and if Muslim, either Sunni or Shi'i.

The difference between 1847 and 1866 legal outcomes can be attributed to changes in colonial governance that took place after the Great Rebellion of 1857. As Nicholas Dirks points out, "The Great Rebellion had made it clear to the British that they knew far too little about the colonized populations of India" and "what they did know was far too unsystematic."[1] This led to a new endeavor to track and identify natives much more systemically than they had before. The 1866 case took place during this period when the colonial state began to take an active interest in enumeration. The practice of enumeration of course was not a colonial innovation, but it performed a new function starting in the late nineteenth century. Benedict Anderson has described the differences between the practice of census taking in colonial and precolonial periods. Drawing from the example of Southeast Asia, he explains how precolonial rulers in the Malayo-Javanese context certainly tried to enumerate populations, but this undertaking took on the form of tax rolls and levy lists, which were targeted at keeping track of those on whom the state could impose taxes or military obligation. The innovation of the colonial census takers, however, was the system of quantification that provided the "imagined map" through which not only people but entire social and political bureaucracies—educational, juridical, police, and health—were refashioned and reconfigured into a new demographic topography.[2]

The censuses and gazetteers were the key instruments through which the colonial state created and outlined its "maps" of native society. Indians were identified and classified through categories, which, over the period of the twentieth century, were pared down in number. For example, in the Gazetteer of Bombay Presidency in 1899, the Khojas are discussed as part of the "Gujarat Musulmans" primary group, and within the subdivision of "Hindu Converts." Citing the Aga Khan Case of 1866 as its source, the entry describes the Khojas' religion as "Shiah Ismailiasm."[3] Today, the Indian census does not provide any kind of divisions or subgroupings. In the most recent census of 2011, there were only seven options available: Muslim, Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Christian, Jain, and other.

How are we to understand the increasingly communalized conceptions of religion over the course of the twentieth century? Nicholas Dirks

makes an explicit connection between the census categories and the subsequent communalization of religious identities. He explains how one of the major repercussions of census was the creation a new political discourse of majority and minority. "Hindus" were the majority group in India, and "Muslims" were the dominant minority, among other smaller yet equally discrete religious groups. This idea of a majority was new, and so too was the religious identity "Hindu," which made uniform a wide range of beliefs and practices and functioned as an opposition to "Muslim" and other minority groups.[4] The communalization of religious identities facilitated separate electorates for Muslims and culminated in the partition of India.

This genealogy of modern religious identities, which traces its origins to administrative changes of the colonial state, provides an important account of Islam from an identitarian or reform perspective. But there was also another side to this historical process, and this is where we turn to the accretive aspect of Sultan Muhammad Shah's leadership style. Seen from this light, Sultan Muhammad Shah instituted "premodern" practices of devotion, thereby providing a way of thinking about acculturative Islam. This refers to the ways in which Islam was transformed in different cultural milieux. It also draws attention to the heterogeneity that is internal to Islam. This strand of Isma'ili practices has to be seen in tandem with reformist Islam. Although Sultan Muhammad Shah Islamicized the formal *ginān* canon by replacing Hindu references with Muslim ones, the earlier accretion mode was still active within the private, specifically Isma'ili, sphere of religion. "Enthronement Hymn," for example, still retains many of its ideas and beliefs of Satpanth religiosity, especially its conception of imamate authority. When comparing the canonized *ginān* with *Dasavatār*, it is apparent that Sultan Muhammad Shah worked within the thematic and structural heterogeneity of the *ginān* genre to assert his singular claim as imam—without disruption to the poetic conventions. The imamate messianic idea serves as one example of how the earlier mixed religious idioms persist despite their effacement by institutional terms of categorization (by the colonial state) and theological modes of interpretation (of Ismaili studies scholarship).

Jacob Taubes and Giorgio Agamben have examined specific figures, gestures, images, and silences of the messianic idea in response to theological interpretations of early Christian texts. They study Paul's writings in ways that brush against the grain of traditionally Christian theological and exegetical expositions of the text. In short, Taubes and Agamben seek to undo the ways in which Paul has been assimilated to the Christian tradition. Their readings of the messianic help us imagine nonidentitarian

forms of belonging and ways of thinking. Through this same counterintuitive insight, I argue, it is possible to understand how this pluralistic and indigenous constellation of the messianic helps distinguish the peculiar character of Islam expressed by the *ginān*s. The organizing and central figure of the messianic in *ginān* poetry is imbricated within Buddhist, Shi'i, and Vaishnava religious idioms. The messiah in this instance is manifested not as an entity as such but rather as an undoing of identity.

The *ginān*s allow us to think about Islam in ways that are not determined by the logic of Orientalist and reformist Islam. This is not a nostalgic attempt to recoup a pluralistic past; these earlier expressions of religiosity provide a way to think about Islam's acculturation in the Indian context. These practices of cultural exchange that were part of the history of Islam's expansion are relevant today because they resist both the "territorial" biases that are at work in "clash-of-the-civilizations" discourse and the Middle East/Arab-centrism that underlies the legacy of the Orientalist study of Islam.

The dynamics and imaginaries at work in *ginān*s are embedded in local contexts; as texts of religious accretion, their texture and movement escape the modes of thematization that are enjoined in identitarian paradigms of religion. This porous character of Satpanth religiosity conveyed in the *ginān*s finds expression in Satpanth historical memory and the ways Satpanthis negotiate their identity today. Satpanthis believe that not just Isma'ilis but also Hindu groups, such as the Swami Narayans, participated in the Satpanth milieu. Satpanth religiosity expressed in the *ginān*s is neither Hindu nor Muslim because none of the Vaishnava, Shi'i, and Buddhist forms and ideas in the poetry demarcates a self-contained "tradition." To understand the *ginān*s as conduits of and between Qur'anic and Sanskritic thought enables more capacious ways of understanding Islam as a genuinely global phenomenon. This globality is not merely descriptive; it requires a shift in our conceptual framework that would require us to conceive of Islam as internally heterogeneous.

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Notes

Introduction

1. A helpful discussion and critique of syncretism as a conceptual category can be found in *Syncretism/Anti-Syncretism: The Politics of Religious Synthesis*, ed. Rosalind Shaw and Charles Stewart (London: Routledge, 1994). I introduce my discussion of the term syncretism on pages 10–12 of this chapter and provide a more extensive analysis of the idea in Chapter 3.
2. For both literary and historical discussion of the poetry, see Ali Asani, "The Ginan Literature of the Ismailis of Indo-Pakistan" in *Devotion Divine: Bhakti Traditions from the Regions of India*, ed. D. L. Eck and F. Mallison (Groningen: Egbert Forsten, 1991), 1–18; Aziz Esmail, *A Scent of Sandalwood: Indo-Ismaili Religious Lyrics* (Surrey: Curzon Press, 2002); Tazim Kassam, *Songs of Wisdom and Circles of Dance: Hymns of the Satpanth Ismaili Muslim Saint Pir Shams* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1995); Christopher Shackle and Zawahir Moir, *Ismaili Hymns from South Asia: An Introduction to the Ginans* (London: SOAS, 1992).
3. *Dasavatār*, a medieval/early modern Gujarati poem exists in three separate manuscript versions and is attributed to three different authors: Pir Shams, Pir Sadruddin, and Pir Imam Shah. Of these three, the longest version of *Dasavatār* is attributed to Imam Shah. Gulshan Khakee has translated the tenth avatar portion (*Dasamo Avatār*) of this particular version of *Dasavatār* into English. Khakee explains that her translation emerges from two manuscripts. The first is an Imam Shahi manuscript belonging to the pir of the Imam Shahi satpanthis of the Khandesh area, which is dated to 1823, and another older version found at the Isma'ili Research Association at Karachi,

which is dated to 1781. Since I was not allowed access to the manuscripts and Gujarati printed editions of *ginān*s at the Institute for Ismaili Studies, I have used Khakee's manuscript compilation, transliteration, and translation for this study of *Dasavatār*. Gulshan Khakee, "The Dasavatara of the Satpanthi Ismailis and the Imam Shahis of Indo-Pakistan" (Harvard University, unpublished thesis, 1972).

4 Justice Arnould, Bombay High Court Reports, 359–360.

5 Ali S. Asani, "The Khojas of Indo-Pakistan: The Quest for an Islamic Identity," *Journal Institute of Muslim Minority Affairs*, 8 (January 1987): 37.

6 Dominique-Sila Khan explains: "During the conference that was held in Paris and chaired by the Aga Khan a resolution was passed regarding the classification of the *ginans* into three categories: the first, unproblematic one referred to the texts that did not contain 'Hindu elements' and which were to continue to be recited as such in the jamaat khanas, the prayer halls of the Nizari Ismailis. The second category comprised the hymns that included a few Hindu terms. It was decided to replace these words by their Islamic equivalents: in this way 'Hari' became 'Ali', 'Gur', 'Pir' etc. As for the third category, which had excessive Hindu elements such as the famous Dasavatar, they were simply banned": Dominique-Sila Khan, "Reimagining the Buddha: The Figure of Shakyamuni in the Nizari Ismaili Tradition of South Asia," *The Journal of Indian Philosophy* 33 (January 2005): 340.

7 See the work of scholars such as Ali Asani, Gulshan Khakee, Francoise Mallison, Zawahir Moir, and Dominique-Sila Khan. Ali Asani, "The Ginan Literature of the Ismailis of Indo-Pakistan," 1–18; Gulshan Khakee, "The Dasavatara of the Satpanthi Ismailis and the Imam Shahis of Indo-Pakistan"; Francoise Mallison, "Hinduism as Seen by the Nizari Isma'ili Missionaries of Western India: The Evidence of the Ginan," in *Hinduism Reconsidered*, ed. G. D. Sontheimer and H. Kulke (New Delhi: Manohar, 1989), 93–103; Christopher Shackle and Zawahir Moir, *Ismaili Hymns from South Asia: An Introduction to the Ginans*; Dominique-Sila Khan, *Conversions and Shifting Identities: Ramdev Pir and the Ismailis in Rajasthan* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1997).

8 Farhad Daftary, *A Short History of the Ismailis: Traditions of a Muslim Community* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998), 183.

9 According to the influential scholar of Isma'ili studies, Azim Nanji, *Dasavatār* is considered an Ismaili conversion text. Nanji explains that the first nine avatars in *Dasavatār* correspond to the names of the classical Sanskrit text's order of Vishnu's descents. However, with the tenth avatar, *Dasavatār* diverges from the classical Sanskrit version, and Nanji thus claims that the figure of the final avatar represents a rupture between Hindu and Isma'ili theologies. According to this view, the poem stages a break between Hindu and Muslim "religions" in the modern sense of those terms. And this break or rupture is then used to define the community as Muslim converts. Azim Nanji, *The Nizari Ismaili Tradition in the Indo-Pakistan Subcontinent* (New York: Caravan Books, 1978), 113. Ali Asani also argues that the text demonstrates a process of "integration" through which the doctrine of the Imam—the Isma'ili component—is incorporated into a Vaishnavite framework. See Ali Asani, "The Ginan Literature of the Ismailis of Indo-Pakistan," in *Devotion Divine: Bhakti Traditions from the Regions of India*, ed. D. L. Eck and F. Mallison (Groningen: Egbert Forsten, 1991), 14.

10 Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage, 1979).

11 Richard Eaton, *Essays on Islam and Indian History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 10–11.

12 Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003); Richard King, *Orientalism and Religion: Postcolonial Theory, India, and the "The Mystic East"* (New York: Routledge, 1999); Tomoko Masuzawa, *The Invention of World Religions Or, How European Universalism Was Preserved in the Language of Pluralism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

13 See definitions of church and sect in Ernst Troeltsch, *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches, Vol. 1* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1931), 331–334. For an examination of the ways in which "sect" has been applied in the Indian context, see Max Weber, *The Sociology of Religion* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1922) and H. H. Wilson, *Religious Sects of the Hindus* (London: The Christian Literature Society for India, 1904).

14 The Aga Khan Case took place shortly after the Rebellion of 1857, at a time when the British government initiated detailed studies of natives in order to understand why the rebellion took place and how to prevent similar uprisings. Although the Aga Khan Case of 1866 occurred before the first census, the judgment reveals an investment in anthropological classification that anthropologists such as Bernard Cohn and Nicholas Dirks have discussed. Bernard S. Cohn, *Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996); Nicholas Dirks, *Castes of Mind: Colonialism and the Making of Modern India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).

15 Amrita Shodhan has provided the most extensive historical account of how the Isma'ilis were constituted as a community in the nineteenth century. Amrita Shodhan, *A Question of Community: Religious Groups and Colonial Law* (Calcutta: Samya Press, 2001). South Asia historians have convincingly argued that religious identity formation in modern South Asia has been shaped by the rationalizing aims of the late colonial state. See Gyanendra Pandey, *The Construction of Communalism in Colonial North India* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990); Peter Van der Veer, *Religious Nationalism: Hindus and Muslims in South Asia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994). In this context, official definitions of religious identity have relied upon the selection, production, and canonization of texts. Such synergy of text and community-formation has been demonstrated in studies of the Sikh community and can also be seen in the history of various Hindu and Muslim reform movements. Kenneth Jones, *Socio-Religious Reform Movements in British India* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989); Barbara Metcalf, *Islamic Revival in British India: Deoband, 1860–1900* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982); Harjot Oberoi, *Construction of Religious Boundaries: Culture, Identity, and Diversity in the Sikh Tradition* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997).

16. Nicholas Dirks has claimed that the colonial construction of caste was central to these ethnographic accounts. India's multiple forms of social organization and its religious communities were all interpreted as part of a larger social system, the caste system. Dirks explains how the census invoked a totalizing idea of caste that was adopted from Orientalist and Christian missionary studies which interpreted Indian society on the basis of classical Sanskrit texts. Dirks, 149.
17. This new identity decided in the Aga Khan Case was later codified into official administrative documents such as gazetteers and censuses. The Bombay Presidency Gazetteer of 1899, for example, describes the Khoja caste as Hindu converts to Ismā'īlī Islam. The Aga Khan Case of 1866 is provided as the source for this entry. *Gazetteer of the Bombay Presidency. Volume IX Part II, Gujarat Population: Musalmans and Parsis*, ed. James M. Campbell (Bombay: Government Central Press, 1899), 36–49.
18. Mahmood Mamdani has described how colonial authorities in Africa used the legal system to exercise control over native subjects through two main classificatory concepts: "tribe" and "race." Mamdani explains how natives were organized within a system of "tribes" while groups such as Arabs, Asians, and Europeans were classified as "races." Races were ruled by civil law, and tribes by customary law. Each "tribe" was considered politically and culturally distinct from other tribes, while members of a particular "race" were thought to share political, social, and cultural markers with other members of that race. In reality, Mamdani explains, natives often had much more in common with each other than with the nonnatives with whom they shared a putative "race," since members of the former came from different parts of the world, spoke different languages, and practiced different religions. Mahmood Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996).
19. Frederick M. Denny, *Islam and the Muslim Community* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1987); John L. Esposito, *Islam: The Straight Path* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994); S. A. Nigosian, *Islam. Its History, Teaching, and Practices* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004); Fazlur Rahman, *Islam* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979); Andrew Rippen, *Muslims: Their Religious Beliefs and Practices* (New York: Routledge, 2005).
20. Richard Eaton, *India's Islamic Traditions, 711–1750* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003), 3–4.
21. Marshall Hodgson chose the term "Islamicate" rather than "Islamic" in order to underscore the cultural and historical changes that took place in African and Asian civilizations as Islam spread outside the Arab world. As part of his interest in challenging the Eurocentric divide between Western civilization and the "Islamic world," Hodgson's approach foregrounds Islamic history in world civilization studies and seeks to broaden the study of Islamic civilization from Islam. In doing so, he coins the term "Islamicate" as a way to acknowledge the role of both secular as well as non-Islamic influences in the development of Islamic civilization. Hodgson's idea of "Islamicate" is helpful in that it calls attention to shifts in cultural terrain that took place with Islam's expansion and opens up the possibility for understanding the kinds of cultural borrowings that mark the process. Marshall Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam Volume 1: The Classical Age* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977).

22. Sheldon Pollock, "The Cosmopolitan Vernacular," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 57 (Feb. 1998).
23. David Lorenzen describes *panths* as popular religious movements. According to him, a *panth* "fosters and inculcates a fairly specific social ideology, that is, a normative set of beliefs and attitudes about how the social system should be structured." This social ideology is traditionally transmitted through songs, verses, stories, and everyday ritual practices. The subjects of social ideology tend to be drawn from classical Sanskrit *Mahabharata*, *Ramayana*, and *purana* tales, and frequently, the object of interpretation and critique is the *varnasrama-dharma* (norms of the caste) system. David Lorenzen, *Religious Movements in South Asia 600–1800* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 16–17. I draw on Lorenzen's outline of *panth* movements in my discussion of the Satpanth in the third chapter. Christian Novetzke has recently made the point that to define *bhakti* and *panth* traditions exclusively as movements occludes the significance of the public and performative aspects of these communities. The public and performative aspects of the Satpanth tradition are indeed important—especially at a place like Pirana, where the public recitation of *granths* is integral to Satpanth practice. However, this study focuses on the literary imaginary of the *granths*, as a way to understand the Satpanth as a religio-historical complex of South Asian Islam. The emphasis is thus on the study of Islam's expansion rather than the contours of *bhakti* performativity. On Namdev see Novetzke, *Religion and Public Memory: A Cultural History of Saint Namdev in India* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008).
24. Some scholars work with and some work against the model of syncretism. Bruce Lawrence and David Gilmartin, eds., *Beyond Turk and Hindu: Rethinking Religious Identities in Islamicate South Asia* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2000); Tony Stewart, "In Search of Equivalence: Conceiving Muslim-Hindu Encounter through Translation Theory," *History of Religions* (Feb. 2001): 261; Imtiaz Ahmad and Helmut Reifeld, *Lived Islam in South Asia* (Delhi: Social Science Press, 2004).
25. Richard Eaton, *The Rise of Islam and the Bengal Frontier, 1204–1760* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 288–290.
26. This idea, the doctrine of the imamate, developed from a basic notion of a leader who would bring justice to the oppressed in the early years of Islam, to a highly complex concept of the eschatological hidden imam. Abdulaziz Sachedina, *Islamic Messianism* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1981), 18.
27. Narayanan explains how *Cirappurāṇam* "illustrates how the generic conventions of Tamil literary production have defined a framework for Muslim participation in the Tamil religious world. This was the case even though the focus of devotion was a figure who lived in a foreign land, the prophet Muhammad. On the one hand, as a *sīrah*, or life of the Prophet, the *Cirappurāṇam* linked Tamil devotees of the Prophet generically to a wider Islamic world, the text defined clearly the connections of Tamil Muslims to a world of devotion to the Prophet, whose boundaries were far wider than either Tamil vocabulary or Tamilnadu. On the other hand, the poet Umaru's claims to recognition

depended on his skill in manipulating a Tamil devotional idiom defined by the text's generic claim to be a *puranam*. The conventions and vocabulary of the text thus rooted devotion to the Prophet in a Tamil conceptual world—a world shared by both Hindus and Muslims. It was generic conventions that helped to construct a framework for identity that was simultaneously Muslim and Tamil." Vasudha Narayan, "Religious Vocabulary and Regional Identity. A Study of the Tamil Cirappuranam," in Lawrence and Gilmartin, eds., *Beyond Turk and Hindu*, 92.

28. Belief in the future coming of an imam is a key feature of traditions of Shi'i Islam. With Imami Shi'ism in particular, the belief in the messianic imam serves as more than just a basic idea, for it is only through recognition and belief in this imam that salvation is guaranteed. Abdulaziz Sachedina, *Islamic Messianism: The Idea of the Mahdi in Twelver Shi'ism* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1981), 9.
29. *Dasavatāra* structurally conforms to the genre of the *puranas* in which the heroic acts that avatars perform for the welfare of humankind form the primary subject matter. Cornelia Dimmitt and J. A. B. Van Buitenen, *Classical Hindu Mythology: A Reader in the Sanskrit Puranas* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1978), 62.
30. Abbas Amanat explains "Contrary to the Sunni *mahdi*, whose advent was aimed to enhance the foundations of Islam on a periodic (centennial) basis, Shi'i Islam essentially strived to invoked the Imamate paradigm so as to bring about the resurrection and an end to the prevailing dispensation. The Imam's advent was to differentiate the forces of good from evil in two confronting armies and establish the sovereignty of the House of the Prophet." Abbas Amanat, "The Resurgence of Apocalyptic in Modern Islam" in *The Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism, vol. III: Apocalypticism in the Modern Period and the Contemporary Age* (New York: Continuum, 2000), 237–238.
31. The tenth avatar is the "expected deliverer" who "is to come and humble or destroy the forces of wickedness and establish the rule of justice and equity on earth." Sachedina, 1.
32. The arrival of the tenth avatar from is very much in accordance with Shi'i *mahdi* theology which anticipates an "appearance (*zuhūr*)" or "rise" that sparks a "great social transformation." Sachedina, 2.
33. Sudipta Kaviraj, *The Imaginary Institution of India* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 12.
34. *Gazetteer of Bombay Presidency*, 1879, v. 4, 290.
35. Kaviraj, *The Imaginary Institution of India*, 12.
36. *Gazetteer*, 290.
37. Kaviraj, *The Imaginary Institution of India*, 15.
38. "Approaches to the Study of Conversion to Islam in India," in *Religious Movements in South Asia 600–1800*, ed. David Lorenzen (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2004).
39. Eaton, *The Rise of Islam*, 111.
40. Ibid., 112.
41. Peter van der Veer has aptly described conversion as an "innovative" practice in the colonies, whereby entire communities were transformed through through the encounter with Christian and European modernity. Gauri Viswanathan has elaborated upon the complexities of conversion in the modern period, arguing that the category of conversion must be interrogated through the limitations rather than the of terms rights, belief, and choice. Peter Van der Veer, *Conversion to Modernities: The Globalization of Christianity* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 7; Gauri Viswanathan, *Outside the Fold: Conversion, Modernity, and Belief* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998).

1 Prehistories of the Isma'ili Sect in Nineteenth-Century Bombay

The epigraph is from General Sir Charles Napier, quoted in Mihir Bose, *The Aga Khans* (Surrey: World's Work Ltd., 1984), 41.

1. Zawahir Noorally, "The First Agha Khan and the British: British-Indian Diplomacy and Legal History, 1838–1868 A.D." Unpublished MA Thesis, SOAS (1954), 43.
2. Bose, 23.
3. Hamid Algar, "The Revolt of the Agha Khan Mahallati and the Transference of the Ismaili Imamate to India," *Studia Islamica*, 29 (1969).
4. Ibid, p. 60. Also, J. B. Fraser, who traveled in Persian Khorasan between 1821 and 1822, mentions that the father of the Agha Khan, Khalilu'llah, was murdered by the people of Yazd because Khalilu'llah had extorted revenues from the people. See J. B. Fraser, *Narrative of a Journey into Khorasan* (London: Longmans, 1825), 377.
5. Farhad Daftary, *A Short History of the Ismailis* (Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 1998), 196.
6. Hamid Algar, "The Revolt of the Agha Khan Mahallati and the Transference of the Ismaili Imamate to India," *Studia Islamica*, 29 (1969), 62.
7. Ibid.
8. Noorally, *First Aga Khan*, 21.
9. Whether the British were involved in the Aga Khan's revolts or not, the Persian government was fully aware of British investment and presence in the region. Ibid., 33–34.
10. Ibid., 48.
11. Bose, *The Aga Khans*, 21.
12. Noorally, *First Aga Khan*, 48.
13. In the letter Macnaghten stated that it would be impossible to refuse asylum to the Aga Khan "without a manifest breach of those laws of hospitality which specially among the Eastern nations are held in general reverence" and that "yes, he should be received by Timour as a guest who had sought the protection of the Afghan monarchy." Bose, *The Aga Khans*, 20.
14. While Macnaghten explained that the Aga Khan should be welcomed as a guest seeking asylum, he specifically told Rawlinson that the Aga Khan ought to refrain from mischief. However, Macnaghten was keen on keeping the Aga Khan in the picture, as he told Rawlinson in the same letter: "You cannot do wrong in playing with Agha Khan as long as possible." Noorally, *First Aga Khan*, 46–47.
15. Ibid., 78.

16. Farhad Daftary, *The Ismailis: their history and doctrines* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 511–512.
17. Noorally, *First Aga Khan*, 70.
18. During his time in Sind, he requested permission to return to Persia. However, Napier, like Macnaghten, was not ready to give up the Aga Khan, and so he offered to raise his salary in order to keep him working for the British. Ibid., 77.
19. Ibid., 135.
20. Ibid.
21. Nile Green convincingly uses the language of market economy to describe the Aga Khan's efforts in securing his religious authority in Bombay. Green claims that the Aga Khan set in motion a "determined missionary marketing campaign" and describes the Aga Khan as an "entrepreneur" who "used the various opportunities that Bombay presented to 'reinvent' the customary authority of his ancestors around himself." Nile Green, *Bombay Islam: The Religious Economy of the West Indian Ocean, 1840–1915* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 157–158.
22. Amrita Shodhan, *A Question of Community: Religious Groups and Colonial Law* (Calcutta: Samya Press, 2001), 86.
23. James Masselos, "The Khojas of Bombay: The Defining of Formal Membership Criteria during the Nineteenth century," in *Caste and Social Stratification among Muslims in India*, ed. Imtiaz Ahmad (Delhi: Manohar, 1978), 223.
24. Ibid., 3.
25. Ibid., 4.
26. Christine Dobbin, *Urban Leadership in Western India: Politics in Bombay 1840–1885* (London: Oxford University Press, 1972), 9.
27. Masselos, 4.
28. Ibid., 5.
29. Ibid., 6. This setup of a Sunni mosque adjacent to the *jamat khana* was unique to the Khoja community of Bombay. According to Dobbin, this kind of maneuvering on the part of the *shetias* was intentional. Whereas many Khojas in both Gujarat and Bombay did not identify as Sunni, Dobbin claims that the *shetias* decided to steer the community in the direction of Sunni Islam, "thus removing it from the Shia orbit and helping it to amalgamate with the Sunni majority in Bombay": Dobbin, 113–114.
30. Unlike the case of 1866, there are no actual newspaper reports of the 1847 case. The only account of the case available is in the judgment itself: Sir Thomas Erskine Perry, *Cases Illustrative of Oriental Life and the Application of English Law to India Decided in Her Majesty's Supreme Court at Bombay* (London: S. Sweet, 1853), 119–120.
31. Ibid., 121.
32. Ibid., 123.
33. Ibid., 113–114.
34. Ibid., 112.
35. Ibid., 112–113.
36. Ibid., 114.
37. Ibid., 114.

38. This incident is also mentioned in the 1847 judgment, in which Perry, after introducing the Aga Khan as the descendant of Pir Sadrudin, explains that the relationship between the Aga Khan and Khojas is a tenuous one. Perry states, "But even to the blood of their saint they [Khojas] adhere by a frail tenure; for it was proved that when the grandmother of Aga Khan made her appearance in Bombay some years ago, and claimed tithes from the faithful, they repudiated their allegiance, commenced litigation in this court, and professed to the Kazi of Bombay their intention to incorporate themselves with the general body of Mussalmans in this island": ibid., 113–114.
39. Ibid.
40. Ibid.
41. Masselos describes what transpired between the Aga Khan and the expelled *barbhai* as a "standoff." He explains that "the demands of the Aga Khan had not been fully met but he had gained a foothold amongst the Bombay Khojas and his direct influence over them had been demonstrated. Thereafter, regular, if not the extremely large contributions that had been desired, were remitted to him in Persia. In addition, his agent Muhamed Kurreem remained in Bombay to preserve his interest and, as his representative, to maintain and extend his influence": Masselos, 9.
42. Among the Bombay *shetias*, there was a long-standing tradition of educational patronage. Wealthy merchants often provided aid to poorer students; some even founded English-language schools.
43. Ibid., 116.
44. Anonymous author, *A Voice from India* (London: Waterlow and Sons, 1864), 5.
45. Ibid., 7.
46. Ibid., 7.
47. Ibid., 8–9.
48. Ibid., 12.
49. Ibid., 10.
50. Ibid., 6.
51. Ibid., 1–2.
52. Ibid., 10.
53. Ibid., 12.
54. Ibid., 11.
55. Ibid., 12.
56. Dobbin, *Urban Leadership*, 116. Also, the text of the Declaration of Rights appears in *A Voice from India*, 19–20.

2. Sectarian Showdown in the Aga Khan Case of 1866

The epigraph is from Justice Arnould, Bombay High Court Reports, 359.

1. In the early nineteenth century, Bombay city operated under the Recorder's court, which later became the Supreme Court. By 1827, Elphinstone had established the Bombay Regulation Code, or the "Elphinstone code," according to which native commissioners heard cases at the lowest level of the system, assistant judges heard cases at the next level, the District Diwani and Faujdari

Adalats at the next, and the Sadar Diwani and Nizamat Adalat at the highest level. This order, established in 1827, was overhauled and reworked after the 1857 rebellion. See: Amrita Shodhan, *A Question of Community: Religious Groups and Colonial Law* (Calcutta: Samya Press, 2001), 5–6

1. Bernard S. Cohn, "The Census, Social Structure and Objectification in South Asia," in *An Anthropologist among the Historians and Other Essays* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1987); Nicholas Dirks, *Castes of Mind: Colonialism and the Making of Modern India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001); Kenneth W. Jones, "Religious Identity and the Indian Census," in *The Census in British India: New Perspectives* (Delhi: Manohar Press, 1981).
3. Shodhan explains that the judge treated Khojas as a sect and their property as a charitable trust in accordance with English law regarding philanthropic and religious organizations. The investigation into the original religion of the Khojas was tied to the question of rightful ownership of the charitable trust (89–90).
4. Justice Arnould, Bombay High Court Reports, 321
5. Ibid., 324
6. Ibid., 323.
7. *Times of India*, 17 April 1866.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid.
12. Ibid.
13. Ibid.
14. See Introduction, note 3.
15. *Times of India*. 23 April 1866.
16. Ibid.
17. Ibid.
18. Bernard Lewis's book *The Assassins: A Radical Sect in Islam* discusses the history of the Isma'ili leader Hasan-i Sabbah, a Persian Isma'ili convert, who seized Alamut castle and other mountain strongholds in northern Persia and southern Khurasan. Hasan-i-Sabbah was an extremely powerful man, under whose leadership the Nizari Isma'ilis (later given the title "Assassins") evolved into a highly organized, secretive group that worked to overthrow the dominant authority of the Abbasids and later the Seljuks. Bernard Lewis, *The Assassins: A Radical Sect in Islam* (New York: Basic Books, 2002).
19. See several articles in *A Voice from India*. The writers call the Aga Khan the "chief assassin" responsible for the murders of 1850.
20. *Times of India*, 23 April 1866.
21. This mention of "Mazdakes" most likely refers to Mazdakites. The information about Mazdak in the historical record comes from Mazdak's alleged association with Sassanian king, King Kawat (488 to 497 and 499 to 531). Arab historians, such as at-Tabari identify the king's association with Mazdak as the reason for his imprisonment after his reign. Many Islamic

sources—Arabic and Persian—corroborate this account. It seems that Mazdak and his followers argued that what God had given humans ought to be distributed equally, and that, for example, the wealth of the rich ought to be distributed to the poor. In this way, they were construed as early "communists." This history of Mazdak and Mazdakism, however, is much disputed. See Heinz Gaube, "Mazdak. Historical Reality or Invention?" *Studia Iranica* 11–12 (1982): 111–122.

22. [redacted]
23. *Times of India*, 23 April 1866
24. Ibid.
25. The first passage suggests that Anstey used the *Dabistan* as the source of information about *Dasatir*. The *Dabistan*, or *Dabistan-i Mazahib*, translated as "School of Religious Doctrines," was written anonymously between 1643 and 1658. The text explains the prevalent religions in India in the seventeenth century and consists of twelve chapters (or teachings). Each chapter is devoted to a particular religious group—such as Hindus, Jews, Christians, Muslims, Sufis, etc. In the last sections of the chapter on Parsis, Zoroastrian sects and Mazdakites are addressed. The author of *Dabistan* draws his information about the Zoroastrians and Mazdakite sects from several sources, one of which is *Dasatir*. See *Encyclopedia Iranica*, Volume VI (1982), 532–534. The composition date of 1643 is also claimed for *Dabistan-i Mazahib*. See Nabi Hadi, *Dictionary of Indo-Persian Literature* (New Delhi: Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, 1995), 360–361
26. The bookseller's explanation of the *Desatir* published in 1818 describes *Desatir* as "a collection of writings of the different Persian prophets, who flourished from the time of Mahabad to the time of the fifth Sasan, being fifteen in number; of whom Zerdasht or Zoroaster was the 13th, and the fifth Sasan the last[. . .] The writings of these fifteen Prophets are in a tongue which no other vestige appears to remain[. . .]" *The Desatir; or, Sacred Writings of the Ancient Persian Prophets*, ed. Mulla Firuz bin Kaus (Bombay: J.F. de Jesus, 1818). The *Encyclopedia Iranica* entry repeats these same points, describing *Dasatir* as a book "written in an invented language, that is) about supposedly ancient Iranian prophets and includes accounts of events that have no historical basis." The book is divided into two parts—the first of which is divided into sixteen chapters, with each attributed to a supposed prophet. The second part is a Persian "translation" of the first—which also contains fabricated words. It is from the Persian of the second part that the date is attributed to the 16th–17th centuries. The language of *Dasatir* "has no fundamental connection or resemblance to any living or dead language," and "the vocabulary is for the most part fabricated." "Shat Dasatir" is a reference to "Dasatir" with an honorific title. See *Encyclopedia Iranica*, VII (1982), 85.
27. See below, note 32.
28. *Times of India*, 23 April 1866. *Dasavatár*, or "Ten Avatars of Vishnu," was read over dying Khojas. *Desatir*, rendered as either "Ten parts" or the plural of "priest" *(dastur)*, is the book about Persian prophets.

29. Ibid.
30. *Times of India* 26 April 1866
31. Ibid.
32. From this point of the trial to the end, *Dasatr* is used interchangeably with *Dasavatar*. Although when *Dasatr* came up in the report of April 25 it was stated that "the interpreter said the words proper name of the book was Dushavatar." This, however, did not seem to change [illegible] discussion on *Dasatr*, in which he actually quote[illegible] describe *Dasatr*, from here on, *Dasatr* or *Dasatr* refers to [illegible] not the Persian text.
33. *Times of India* 25 April 1866
34. *Bombay Gazette*, 9 June 1866.
35. *Bombay Gazette* 13 June 1866
36. Ibid.
37. Ibid.
38. Ibid.
39. Ibid.
40. *Bombay Gazette*. 9 June 1866
41. Ibid.
42. *Bombay Gazette*, 9 June 1866.
43. *Bombay Gazette*. 13 June 1866
44. Ibid.
45. Ibid.
46. Ibid
47. Ibid.
48. Ibid.
49. Ibid.
50. *Bombay Gazette* 13 June 1866
51. Justice Arnould, Bombay High Court Reports 112
52. Ibid., 331.
53. Ibid.
54. Ibid. 332.
55. Ibid., 333.
56. Ibid.
57. Ibid., 335.
58. Ibid., 338.
59. Ibid., 340.
60. Ibid. 341
61. Ibid.
62. Ibid.
63. Ibid.
64. Ibid., 343.
65. Ibid., 344.
66. Ibid., 345
67. Ibid.
68. Ibid.

69. This information is, according to Arnould, gathered "partly by direct evidence of [illegible] and partly by evidence of tradition in the caste [illegible]"
70. Ibid.
71. Ibid.
72. Ibid.
73. Ibid.
74. Ibid.
75. Ibid.
76. Ibid.

1 Reading Satpanth against the Judicial Archive

The epigraph is from Justice Arnould Bombay High Court Reports, 339

1. Sir Thomas Erskine Perry, *Cases Illustrative of Oriental Life and The Application of English Law to India Decided in Her Majesty's Supreme Court at Bombay* [illegible]
2. Arnould [illegible] *Dasatr* text was [illegible] over Khojas who are at the point of death" and therefore concluded it was the text of "religious observance" among Khojas. He then states the following: "When [illegible] to Khojas [illegible] remains [illegible] the reader pronounces the name of the 'Most Holy Ali' (Mowla Moutzir Aoo Justice Arnould [illegible] the approach [illegible] sprinkling of holy water to the reading [illegible]" Khan in *The Tribes and Castes of Bombay* Vol. 2, ed Reginald E. Enthoven Bombay Government Central Press, 1922, 218–21
3. Sachedina [illegible]
4. Similar to the ways in which classical Indian epics of the *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana* are re-interpreted from a dalit perspective in the "nirgun" *panth* tradition, the *Buddhavatar* story deploys tropes from these great epics as part of a "dissident sectarian religious theology" that emphasizes the injustice of the caste hierarchy and explains the suffering of untouchables by extolling them as heroes. See Joseph Schaffer "Sanskritization, Caste Pluralism and Social Dissidence in the Sant Ravidas Panth," in *Bhakti Religion in North India: Community Identity and Political Action* edited by David Lorenzen (Albany: SUNY Press, 1995) 178. Aspects of the *granths* that critique the inequities of the caste system are relevant today, as low-caste groups such as the Meghvals of Saurashtra and Rajasthan have their own *granths* and follow Satpanth ritual traditions. The critique of caste hierarchy that is at the center of the *Buddhavatar* story does not offer an alternative vision of replacing an existing society with a better one. The Buddha's response to caste injustice

and Brahmanic hegemony is the revelation of his divine form as the ninth of ten avatars. This transformative moment in the poem serves to undercut "the totality of this world with a new totality that comprehensively founds anew in the way that it negates." Jacob Taubes, *Occidental Eschatology* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), 9

5. Ibid.
6. David Lorenzen explains how popular religious movements—often referred to as "panths" in the medieval and early modern context—were socioreligious groups that were demarcated by particular social ideologies that were traditionally transmitted through songs, verses, stories, and everyday ritual practices. These ideologies often took the form of a critique of *varnasrama-dharma* (norms of the caste) system: Lorenzen, *Bhakti Religion in North India*, 17–18.
7. Talal Asad argues that the Islamic tradition "is based on the notion of plural social groupings and plural religious traditions—especially (but not only) of the Abrahamic traditions (ahl al-kitab). And of course, it has always accommodated a plurality of scriptural interpretations. There is a well-known dictum in the shari'a, ikhtilaf al-umma rahma (difference within the Islamic tradition is a blessing)." See Talal Asad, "Interview with Talal Asad: Modern Power and the Reconfiguration of Religious Traditions," *SEHR*, volume 5, issue 1: Contested Polities (updated February 27, 1996).
8. Troeltsch, *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches*, 331–334. For an examination of the ways in which "sect" has been applied in the Indian context, see Max Weber, *The Sociology of Religion*, and H. H. Wilson, *Religious Sects of the Hindus*.
9. Justice Arnould, Bombay High Court Reports, 331
10. Ibid., 359
11. Ibid.
12. Nanji, *The Nizari Ismaili Tradition*, 111–113.
13. Ibid., 123. Ali Asani also argues that the text demonstrates a process of "integration" through which the doctrine of the Imam—the Isma'ili component—is incorporated into a Vaishnavite framework. See Asani, "The Ginan Literature of the Ismailis," 14.
14. Khakee, "The Dasavatara of the Satpanthi Ismailis," 472
15. That "Nakalanki" is given primacy above all the various messianic images and epithets in *Dasavatār* is surprising to begin with, considering, for example, the name itself only appears a few times in the five-hundred-verse poem *Dasamo Avatar* of Imam Shah. As Khakee explains in her introduction, the most common epithet of the tenth avatar in *Dasamo Avatar* is "Shah": Khakee, "The Dasavatara of the Satpanthi Ismailis," 14.
16. See ibid., 58, as well as Dominique-Sila Khan's discussion in Dominique-Sila Khan, "The Coming of Nikalank Avatar," in *Journal of Indian Philosophy*, 25 (1997), 413.
17. Tazim Kassam, "Syncretism," 231.
18. Ibid.
19. Ibid. 241
20. Stewart, *History of Religions*, 261

21. Ibid., 281
22. Ibid., 274
23. Ibid., 281
24. Shackle and Moir, *Ismaili Hymns from South Asia*, 43.
25. Some scholars have found this approach of "equivalence" theory relevant to studies of Islam in the Indian context. Jackie Assayag, for example, directly adopts Stewart's equivalence model for understanding relationships between Hindus and Muslims in India. Assayag explains that in order to understand the social history of Islam on the subcontinent, one should not focus on what separates Islam from Hinduism, but instead concentrate on what is shared culturally. As part of a seemingly secular impulse to call attention to shared religious sites, practices, and spaces among Hindus and Muslims, he argues for the relevance of Stewart's "exchange equivalence" theory to understand the encounter of diverse traditions because it "gives priority to the cultural context." See Jackie Assayag, "Can Hindus and Muslims Coexist?" in *Lived Islam in South Asia*, ed. Imtiaz Ahmad and Helmut Reifeld (Delhi: Social Science Press, 2004), 42
26. Barbara D. Metcalf, "The Study of Muslims in South Asia," a talk at the University of California at Santa Barbara on December 2, 2005, http://www.columbia.edu/itc/mealac/pritchett/00islamlinks/ikram/parto_metcalfintro.html (last accessed September 27, 2010)
27. Eaton, *The Rise*, 288–290
28. He explains further, "By proclaiming the finality and superiority of Muhammad's prophetic mission, then, Satyid Sultan's work provides the rationale for displacing all other nabi/avatars from Bengal's religious atmosphere": Eaton, *The Rise* 290
29. This idea, the doctrine of the imamate, developed from a basic notion of a leader who would bring justice to the oppressed in the early years of Islam, to a highly complex concept of the eschatological hidden imam: Abdulaziz Sachedina, *Islamic Messianism* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1981), 18
30. Sachedina, 18
31. Ibid.
32. Isa te dasame hari pātra nakalaki avatāra; te āja bartha ārabha desa majhāra
te ketāka calatra harina kahe; te deva āja kalajuga māhe gubata hoi rahe
te kalajuga māhe gura bhīramā pīra samasa avatāra, te gat fakire firiā
covisa mulaka majhāra
Gulshan Khakee's translation of the Imam Shah *Dasamo Avatar* in the "The Dasavatara of the Satpanthi Ismailis and the Imam Shahis of Indo-Pakistan," 70–72
33. te popata rupe gura pīra samasa thaeā; jihā surajā rānī hotī tene sata khane tihā popata rupe hoi pīra samasa bhane
jihā suraja rānī bethī che sata khanke; tihā popata rupe hoi pīra samasa bhanee
tame suno suraja rānī atharaveda bharana gunāna; jethī tame pāo āgara pāo amarāpurino thāma

eja tu rāṇī rādya dhuāra daita ghara ā; have tarn janama vaṛāratha gaeo

eso vacana sunīne suraja rāni acabu raheā; rāni te gura pupatane pita samasane lāgā jā pāheā

tabha pīra samasa bokā vasāta; tume suno surajā rāni athara vedak vāta

rani amāre kareā iuga māhe rugha veda vepara, te bagata pāmc korīene aīdho pra.hāda

te juga māhe cāra rupa harīe dhareā; deva chāta dānava sāhe āpe saghāreā

rāni tame dujā tretā iuga māhe jāna, tare jujara ved hota paramāna

tāre deve sāte kirorisu bhagata udhāreā hiruadra te juga mahe trana dānava sāhe āpe saghareā

rāni trija dudpura jugano sebena jāna; tare sāma veda hota paramana

nava kirorīso pādhava udhareā, te iuga māhe deva doe dānava shāha āpe saghāreā

te nave kirorīese sidhā jujoatara rāe; te pāmeā amarapurina thama

āja ka.iuga māhe athara veda māhe thāra; te āja kalajuga mahe hari dasmu avatāra

te deva nakalaka avatāra dhareo sīri murāra; te tosu bharathāra mare ho nāra

Khakee, "The Dasavatara of the Satpanthi Ismailis," 95–86.

34. Dimmitt and Van Buitenen, *Classical Hindu Mythology*, 62.

35. te tame suno surajā rāni pīra samasa kahe vicāra; āja rāni tame juga māhe satapantha dhīāvo sāra
te rāni āge satapanth vina sidhā na koe, te sume rāni sataguro vinā mugata na hoe
rāni ā jugamā satapanth a dhyāvo sāra; io teme surajā cāni utaro pāra
rāni tame pārajo satapatha gubataja hos; jema daita dānava na jāne koi

Khakee, 89–91

36. je sāmī purabha janamanī surevā ama suri rahi; te sāmī ame daita dānava ghora āveā sahī

Khakee, 103

37. sāmī te ghara janamma bhaeā; pana ame sataguta sārathī amara thareā

Khakee, "The Dasavatara of the Satpanthi Ismailis," 105

38. surajā rāni kamarā kuara tume pārajo satapatha khari dasadha āpajo sahī , amane pohoce te petīa mahe ghālīne dharīā musāfarane sopajo jāi

Khakee, "The Dasavatara of the Satpanthi Ismailis," 110–111

39. je puri dasadha sukarīta na āpe dharmasāra māhe jāta ātasa kare; te pāedara māhe paāḍhā hoe fure

Khakee, "The Dasavatara of the Satpanthi Ismailis," 409.

40. eva rādya rikhīā karese sata; je nita nita hāla gudhāre dasadha sukarīta gura mukhe purī de

Khakee, "The Dasavatara of the Satpanthi Ismailis," 406.

41. Esp. in Kassam, trans., *Wisdom and Candles of Dance: Hymns of the Satpanth Ismaili Muslim Saint Pir Shams* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1995), 272.

42. Sachedina, *Islamic Messianism*, 1.

43. Ghazanfar's scholarship [illegible] plateau, the two central beliefs that Shi'i messianic [illegible] *ghayba* and return (*rajʿa*) the messiah emerges from hiding; make a[illegible] appearance" (*zuhur*). In order to navigate a "great [illegible] Sachedina favors. Ghazanfar, 2.

44. Khakee, "[illegible] the Satpanthi Ismailis," 155–162.

45. [illegible]

Khakee, 160.

46. [illegible]

Khakee, "[illegible] of the Satpanthi Ismailis," 161–165.

47. [illegible]

Khakee, "[illegible] of the Satpanthi Ismailis," 85.

48. [illegible]

Khakee, 106.

49. sahaje ma.he chatake hota tarana mara

Khakee, "The Dasavatara of the Satpanthi Ismailis," 250.

50. Khakee, "The Dasavatara of the Satpanthi Ismailis," 252–265.

51. te sāmīni sehena mehera sakhara vice na māe; te sāmī cālarā sehena ghora sava gana dharatīe lada varar

Khakee, 101.

52. tam takhata sipasamna shāha hasiya
tam gor imama shaha vate vato kare

Khakee, 110.

53. to deva āja karajugamā nakalamka ābhamga avatāra
to tu bharatāra āja keva na cetore kalīgām gavāra

Khakee, "The Dasavatara of the Satpanthi Ismailis," 344.

54. te khādo manam vicāri mele jādu rāye
te daītanu sarave dala māru tene thāra

Khakee, 162–163.

55. tāre pache sirita sajoga sarave racanā thāe
tāre sarave rakhiāne sāha rādya karāe
tām sarave bheli bese gora mahamda sāthe vajīra

tām trabhavanamā svāmi rāja karāvase
sarave rakhayāne do sadhīra

Khakee, "The Dasavatara of the Sarpanthi Ismailis," 375–376.

56. te ā dasamo āvatārnā vacanam mā cāle nara ne nāra; te āvagamamna nā pade samsāra
je koī Imamsu śrī nārāyanena devano dasamo āvatāra poro sāmale bhane nara ne nāra; tene māhādīnamnī ācam nā lāge lagāra

Khakee, "The Dasavatara of the Sarpanthi Ismailis," 466–467

57. These are my translations of two *Yog Vāni* poems that are part of a collection titled *Jugesar Abdhuna*, attributed to Pir Imam Shah. Because I was refused access to the Institute of Ismaili Studies archive, I was unable to ascertain the manuscript date of this group of poems. (The manuscript dates of the *Buddhavatār* and *Dasavatār* are readily available through secondary scholarship on the *ginān*s.) There is, however, strong circumstantial evidence indicating that the *Yog Vāni* collection is a pre-1850 text. The inclusion of the *Yog Vāni* poems in the canonical publications of the *ginān*s commissioned by Lalji Devraj through the Khoja Sindhi Press in 1921 indicates the long-standing popularity of the poem within the Khoja community. Furthermore, in the body of the present book, I note the strong thematic similarities between the *Yog Vāni*, *Dasavatār*, and *Buddhavatār*.

58. David White, *Alchemical Body: Siddha Traditions in Medieval India* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 8–9.

59. Verses 3 and 5.

60. Verses 6 and 8.

61. Verse 2.

62. Verse 15.

63. Dominique-Sila Khan, "Conversation between Guru Hasan Kabiruddin and Jogi Kanipha. Tantra Revisited by the Ismaili Preachers," in *Tantra in Practice*, ed. David Gordon White (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 287.

64. Vimas and Surbhan are described as devotees of Pir Shams. They are also described in the *ginān*s as imparting religious knowledge through *ginān*s and performing rituals such as collecting the tithe (*dassondh*) and performing the *ghat pat*. See Kassam, *Songs of Wisdom and Circles of Dance*, 402.

65. "The Lord Will Marry the Virgin Earth: Songs of the Time to Come," translated by Dominique Sila Khan and Zawahir Moir in *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 28 (2000), 104–105.

66. Verse 16.

67. Gorakhanatha and Matsyendratha are the mythical founders of the Nath Tradition.

68. jampu dīp māhe sāmī takht rachāya, te shestnā sīrajanahār—jugesar.

69. "Jampu dīp" is the most common name for the Indian lands found in the *ginān*s. It is the name of the river that flows from Mt. Meru, and, according to legend, was formed by the juice of the fruits of a massive jambu tree on the mountain. Also, it is the name of one of the seven continents surrounding Mt. Meru: John Thompson Platts, *Dictionary of Urdu, Classical Hindi and English* (London: Oxford University Press, 1974), 388.

70. Alf Hiltebeitel, *Rethinking India's Oral and Classical Epics: Draupadī among Rajputs, Muslims, and Dalits* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 329. Also, in Françoise Mallison's article on the Sant-vani literature of Saurashtra, "Sant-vani and Harijan, Mahamargi Bhajan and Ismaili Ginan," she explains that three different groups of Saurashtra—the Mahapanthis (also known as Mahamargis or Nijarpanthis), Nathpanthis, and Kabirpanthis—participate in satpanth practices. She describes the Mahapanthis, for example, as a tantric movement with secret rites, open to all yet dominated by the untouchable caste of the Meghvals: Françoise Mallison, "Sant-Vani and Harijan, Mahamargi Bhajan and Ismaili Ginan: A New Appraisal of Popular Devotion in Saurashtra," in *The Banyan Tree: Essays on Early Literature in New Indo-Aryan Languages*, ed. Marinia Offredi (New Delhi: Manohar, 2000), 238.

71. John Carman, *Majesty and Meekness* (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 1994), 21.

72. Dimmitt and Van Buitenen, *Classical Hindu Mythology*, 63.

73. The *ginān Buddhavatār* both forms the ninth story of the larger *Dasavatār* of Imam Shah and exists as its own poem. For the discussion ahead, I have translated the Gujarati printed version of *Buddhavatār* of Pir Sadruddin (Bombay: Lalji Devraj, 1919). The oldest manuscript copy of the *Buddhavatār* attributed to Pir Sadr al-Din is dated to 1800 (Nanji, *The Nizari Ismaili Tradition*, p. 144). For an overview of the entire story and an analysis of the figure of the Buddha in the Pir Sadrudin avatar and the slightly longer Imam Shahi *Buddhavatār*, see Dominique-Sila Khan, "Reimagining the Buddha," 121–142.

74. navma rup hari buddhavatār, mugit roop dharyo murār, Verse 1, *Buddhavatār*.

75. The Pandavas named in this text are Jujesthan, Bhim, and Sohohev, who most likely correspond to Yudhisthir, Bhimsen, and Sahadev of the Mahabharata epic tradition, respectively. The characteristic features of these three—Bhim as the mightiest of the Pandavas, Sahadev as wise one, and Yudhisthir as the steady-minded ideal king—correspond to the representation of all three figures in *Buddhavatār*.

76. mukh chinchā pag vānka jān, page kosh pehere divān; verse 2.

77. girat kot sharīre vahe; pāse kon ubhe nav rahe, verse 4.

78. churi katāri bāndhe tarvār tir, kaman bandhī chadāve ho mīr; verse 3.

79. evo rup dharyo jādurāy, pāndavāne dvāre pota jāy; verse 6.

80. tāre lāgo kaljugne dvāpar utaryā, dev rakhitar thām chodi gaya, verse 8.

81. Hiltebeitel, *Rethinking India's Oral and Classical Epics*, 62.

82. Jugesthan corresponds to Yudhisthir of the classical Mahabharata. See above, note 75.

83. khanī adhārno huo nikhed; tenu ham shīr janānu pāp; verse 12.

84. sunu bhitāmaan hu puchu bhev; keiso pāp tano hove nikhed, verse 13.

85. eso bhīrāmane kahyo bhev; to pāp tanu hove nīkhed; verse 17.
86. bhīrāman ne vachane pandav bhula jāy; māndya hom jagan tene thāya; verse 18.
87. W. L. Smith, *Patterns in North Indian Hagiography* (Stockholm: University of Stockholm, 2000), 212.
88. Chandal ek āve ene thāya, te jaganmānhe kare upāya, verse 20.
89. Vīkat rup dharyo jāduráy, sāmīne drashte sāsu na jováy
Tyāre bolyā shrī buddh suno bhimráy, hamakum āge dayone rapāy
Hu chu khudheyāthī bhukhyo apār, evo jāni āvyo raja jujeshthāne dvār
Māngu ann ne dekhu dīdār hom jagano suno vīchār
Suno chandāl bhīmaj kahe, āge jāneki rajā na toy
Jyā jujeshtan hom jaganaj kare, tyā bethā bhīrāman ved chochare
Hom jaganmāhe vīrghava hoy, tyan chandāl mukh dekh na koī
verses 27–33.
90. tāre shrībuddh bolyā suno bhimráy, chandāl tanī vāt kaho toī
bhīrāmanmāhethī brahmaj gayā, tene rup nabī mahmadkā fiyā
thālī vednī jāne vān, te chandāl bhīm lejo jān
thāl. ved bhīrāman kahe, harī avatārki khabar nav lahe
athar vednī na jāne vān, te chandāl bhim lejo jān
verses 35–39.
91. te avatārko vāro vahe tāki bhīrāman khabar nava lahe
āp svarāthe jutha kahe; mokh mugarkī khabar na lahe
verses 41–42.
trīkdu sughiyā bhīrāman kahe; chotho vednī sugh nav lahe
chotha vednīno jāne vān, te chandāl bhim lejo jān
duāpur yugmāhe tran veda, gayā; āth avatār harinā thayā
ā; navamu rup āvyo chu joy; tāku bhīrāman na kare koī
chandāl bhīrāman māha agīnān; buddh avatārko khate nām.
verses 45–49.
92. Representation of debates between figures of the *nirguna* tradition is quite common. In the *janam-sakhis* of Guru Nanak, Nanak is frequently depicted in conversation with Gorak Nath, for example, and the former always ultimately converts the latter to his philosophy. Also, Kabir and Raidas are depicted arguing about the nature of God, with Kabir taking the *nirguna* position and Raidas the *saguna* position. See W. H. McLeod, *Early Sikh Tradition. A Study of the Janam-Sakhis* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980). Also see John Stratton Hawley and Mark Juergensmeyer, *Songs of the Saints of India* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988).
93. Geoffrey Parrinder, *Avatar and Incarnation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982).
94. kalk rup dīse che ghanu, vachan bole jem vaikunth tanu, verse 53.
95. Verses 55–126. Kshatrījāt, manas jāt, strī jāt, and mahāchandāl in mānas jāt, respectively.
96. Verses 105–120. Some examples include those who are proud and have no scruples when killing, financiers who are deceitful in money-lending and falsify weights and measures. Among the jat of men, those who take two wives and give less love to one of them, and men who in their hearts have neither pity nor faith, and who commit ill deeds and sleep with a clear conscience are *chandal*. Among women the *chandal* include those who do not serve her parents-in-law and husband, those who leave their husbands for another man, and those who spoil the family name. As for the most *chandal* of all, examples include one who does not consider his *dharma*, who charges extra interest, who does not understand others' sufferings, and who does not pay the tithe *(dassond)*.
97. tāre bhīme churā karīche ghanī, e che srībovar dhanī, verse 167.
98. buddh avatār huvo dīn dayāl, tānku bhīrāman kahe chandāl, verse 179.
99. Sahadev of the Mahabharata, see above, note 75.
100. verses 183–187.
101. kāyku kahyā bhīrāmankā karo; kāyku manmā seso dharo; verse 211.
102. jo nīrmal man kari dekho amāra pay; to pāp tamarā sarve jāy; verse 212.
103. jo dīdār āvī amāra joy; to anat jagan tanu phalaj hoy; verse 213.
104. jutha bhīrāman māhā rukhi ray; jagan mandavīyo karī upāy; verse 226. pan dav vatsa upar sadā kirpal; tame dharnīdhar cho dīn dayāl, verse 227.
105. Sachedina, *Islamic Messianism*, 9.

4. Comparative Formations of the Hindu Swami Narayan "Sect"

The epigraph is from M. C. Trivedi, *A Brief Sketch of the Life and Teachings of Swaminarayan* (Kacocchi: 1928), 1–3.

1. According to Weber, charisma is a "certain quality of an individual personality by virtue of which he is considered extraordinary and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities." Bourdieu contends, "Charismatic legitimacy, as we see here, is grounded solely in an act of 'recognition'" For Bourdieu, this activation of charisma can be understood through an individual's "biography" because it provides a way "to explain why a particular individual finds himself socially predisposed to live out and express with particular cogency and coherence, ethical or political dispositions that are already present in a latent state amongst all the members of the class or group of his addressees." See Pierre Bourdieu, "Legitimation and Structured Interests in Weber's Sociology of Religion," in *Max Weber, Rationality, and Modernity*, edited by Scott Lash and Sam Whimster (London: Allen and Unwin, 1987), 129.
2. Raymond Brady Williams, *An Introduction to Swaminarayan Hinduism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 28.
3. Malcolm quoted in Williams, *An Introduction*, 8.
4. Williams, *An Introduction*, 7.
5. Ibid., 12.
6. H. T. Dave, *Life and Philosophy of Shree Swaminarayan* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1974), 8.

7. M. C. Trivedi, *A Brief Sketch of the Life and Teachings of Swaminarayan* (Karachi: 1916), 1–3
8. The left handed Shakti cult, known as the Vama-Marga, was popular in the region at the time. The rituals of the tradition included animal sacrifices, meat-eating and the consumption of intoxicants: Williams, *An Introduction*, 28
9. Reginald Heber, *Narrative of a Journey through the Upper Provinces of India, from Calcutta to Bombay, 1824–1825, Volume II* (London: John Murray. Albemarle Street, 1849), 141–143.
10. Heber, *Narrative of a Journey*, 143
11. N A., "Indian Sect: Memorandum Respecting a Sect Lately Introduced by a Person Calling Himself Swamee Naraen," *Asiatic Journal and Monthly Register for British India and Its Dependencies*, 15 (January–June): 348–349. Sponsored by the East Indian Company and published between 1816 and 1829, this journal chronicles various literary, philosophical, political, economic and cultural developments in British India
12. Ibid
13. H. G. Briggs, Esq., *The Cities of Gujarashtra: Their Topography and History Illustrated, in The Journal of a Recent Tour, with accompanying documents* (Times Press, 1849), 238
14. Briggs, *The Cities of Gujarashtra*, 239.
15. John Malcolm, "Minute on Visiting Cutch" in "Copies of Minutes of Major Gen Sir John Malcolm, Gov of Bombay 1823–1830, 23 April 1829–15 October 1830," (Lithograph, British Library), Add. Ms 22082.
16. Ibid., 162
17. Ibid., 174.
18. Ibid., 162.
19. Ibid., 174.
20. Ibid., 175
21. Malcolm, "Minute on Visiting Cutch," 171
22. Michael Herbert Fisher, *Indirect Rule in India: Residents and the Residency System 1764–1858* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 1–13.
23. Fisher, *Indirect Rule in India*, 12
24. Malcolm, "Minute on Visiting Cutch," 170–171
25. Ibid., 170.
26. Ibid., 170–171
27. Malcolm was both a liberal and romantic. Eric Stokes explains how Malcolm thought it "politic and right to try to conciliate the displaced aristocracy by generous treatment; to cushion the impact of a foreign dominion by an attempt to preserve something of the methods and institutions of Indian society; and to palliate the undesirable effects of direct rule at the hands of a foreign race by encouraging the survival of the Indian states": Eric Stokes, *English Utilitarians and India* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), 16.
28. Ibid., 162.
29. Ibid., 163.
30. Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject*, 72

31. Vasudha Dalmia describes how "traditionalist" movements of the colonial period are characterized by the recognition of both *sruti* and *smriti*, the authority of the *Dharmasastras* and *varnasramadharma*, and centrality of ritual and the temple. "Reformists," on the other hand, most frequently acclaim the Vedas as exclusively authoritative and replace old forms of ritual and worship with their own. Both groups, she states, condemn "superstitious" practices: Vasudha Dalmia, *The Nationalization of Hindu Traditions: Bharatendu Harischandra and Nineteenth Century Banaras* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 7–8.
32. Williams, *An Introduction*, 13–15
33. Ibid., 17
34. Despite this change in status as an object of devotion, he had not given up on his years of discipline as a *sadhu*. He kept his living quarters simple and abided by a strict regimen of preaching and educating people into this new discipline of theology and practice throughout Kathiawad, Kach, and all over Gujarat. Ibid., 20
35. Syed Bava Sahib Ahmadali, *Satpanth Yagna Vidhi* (Amdavad: 1935), 58–59.
36. Addressing this connection between Sahajanand Swami and the Imamshahis, Zawahir Moir and Dominique-Sila Khan explain, "Curiously enough, according to an Imamshahi oral tradition, the founder [of the Swami Narayan Movement] had become a Satpanthi whose role was to collect the *dasondh* (obligatory tithe) from the members of the community. One day he is said to have run away with the money and eventually created his own religious movement." See Khan and Moir, "Coexistence and Communalism," 133–154.
37. Sila-Khan and Moir also state, "Be it as it may, many Patels who were previously affiliated to the Satpanth became followers of Swami Narayan." See Khan and Moir, "Coexistence and Communalism," 133–154.
38. "The Pirana worshippers belong to three classes: foreign Musalmans, local converts and Hindus. Of local converts there are three classes. Momnas. Shekhs or Shekhdas, and Matia Kanbis. . . . The Shekhs or Shekhdas, except that they bury their dead, differ little from Hindus. They are not circumcised, and do not eat with Musulmans; they wear forehead marks, and many of them belong to the Swami Narayan community" (Gazetteer of Bombay Presidency, 1879, v. 4, 290)
39. Ibid.
40. For this discussion of Swami Narayan *Shikshāpatrī*, I have provided my own translations of Sahajanand Swami's *Shikshāpatrī*. Shree Sahajanand Swami, *The Shikshāpatrī* (Bombay: Bhartiya Vidya Bhavan, 1968).
41. Verse 1: vāse yasya sthitā radhā shrīcha yasyāsti vakshasi vrindāvanavihāram tam shrīkrsnam hrdi chintaye

    Verse 2: likhāmi sahajānandasvami sarvānnyāshritān nānādeshasthitān shikshāpatrim vrtālayasthitah

    Verse 3: bhātro rāmpratāpechhārāmayodharmnojanmanoh yāvayodhyāpras adākhyaraghuvirābhidau sutau

Verse 4: mukundānandamukhyāścha naisthikā brahmchārinah grhasthāścha mayarāmabhattādya ye madāshrayāh

Verse 5: sadhavā vidhavā yoshā yāshcha macchishyatām gatāh muktānandādayo ye syuh sādhavashcākhilā api

Verse 6: svadharmarakshikā me taih sarvairvāchyāh sadāshishah shrimannārāyanasmrtyā sahitāh shāstrasammatāh

42. Verse 24: svavarnāshramadharmo ya sa bātavyo no kenachit paradharmo na chācharyo na cha pāshandakapitah

43. Verse 89: bhāvyam shamadamakshāntisantoshādigunānvitaih, brāhmanaih shaurvadhairyādigunopetaishcha bāhujaih

Verse 90: vaishyaishcha krsivānijyakusīdamukhavrttibhih, bhavitavyam tatha shoudrairdvijasevādivrttibhih

44. Vallabha (1478–1530), also known as Vallabhacharya, was the founder of the Pushtimarga school of bhakti. Vallabha is one of the major formulators of bhakti thought. Today, his followers reside primarily in the areas of Gujarat, Rajasthan, and Brai

45. See Shandip Saha, "Creating a Community of Grace: A History of the Pusti Marga in Northern and Western India (1492–1905)" (unpublished dissertation thesis, University of Ottawa, 2004). Saha explains that the Vallabha *sampraddya* drew from all castes, emphasized householder life, adopted strict vegetarianism, preserved varnashramadharma, and most importantly, for the comparison with the Swami Narayana, "within Vallabha ideology, though devotees might be unequa n the worldly realm they were spiritually equal," 114–116.

46. Verse 82: sarvaishnavarājasrivallabhāchāryānandanah, srivitaleshah krsvān yam vratotsavamuryam

Verse 82. kāryastamanusmrtyaiva sarva eva vratotsavāh sevāritishca krshnasya grāhacya tadaditaiva hi. "Those fasts which were prescribed by Shrivithalesha, the son of Shri Vallabhacharya, the most eminent of Vaishnavas shall be followed by my followers, who shall observe fasts and festivals accordingly and shall adopt the mode of worship of Lord Krishna as enjoined by him."

47. Richard Barz, "Kumbhandas: The Devotee as Salt of the Earth," in *Krishna*, ed. Edwin Bryant (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 481

48. David Francis Pocock, *Mind, Body, and Wealth: A Study of Belief and Practice in an Indian Village* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1973), 143

49. In his study of the Swami Narayan text, *Satsangijivanam*, Peter Schreiner has argued that Sahajanand institutionalized his own charisma, for he states that "Sahajanand's charisma is not something effected by his followers . . . rather it is something which he himself consciously wanted, programmed and directed during his lifetime": Peter Shreiner, "Institutionalization of Charisma: The Case of Sahajananda," in *Charisma and Canon: Essays on the Religious History of the Indian Subcontinent*, ed. Vasudha Dalmia, Angelika Malinar, and Martin Christof (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 167. When comparing Vallabha and Chaitanya to Sahajanand Swami, Pocock claims that unlike Sahajanand "neither of these [Vallabha and Chaitanya] teachers

appear to have had any intention of founding a church or sect": Pocock, *Mind, Body, and Wealth*, 108.

50. Peter Schreiner, "Institutionalization of Charisma: The Case of Sahajananda," in *Charisma and Canon: Essays on the Religious History of the Indian Subcontinent*, ed. Vasudha Dalmia, Angelika Malinar, and Martin Christof (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 167.

51. In describing his visit to the Vadtal Laxminarayan temple, Pocock explains that although the central image of the temple is that of Laxminarayan, it is the image of Swami Narayan "which receives the greatest veneration": Pocock, *Mind, Body, and Wealth*, 124.

52. Verse 7: ekāgreanaiva manasā patrilekhah saherukah avadhāryo yamakhilah sarvajīvahitāvahah

Verse 8: ye pālayanti manujāh sacchāstrapratipāditān sadāchārān sadā re tra pratra cha mahāsukhāh

Verse 9: tāsulingārca vartante ye tu swairam kubuddhayah ta ihāmutra cha mahalābhante kasheameva hi

Verse 10: ato bhavadbhir machchhishyaih sāvadhānatayā khilaih prityartām anusmrtyaiva varttitavyam n. rantaram

53. Verse 1, vāse yasya smitā radhā shrīcha yasyāsti vakshasi vrindāvanavihāram tam srīkrsnam hrdi chintaye

Verse 2: likhāmi sahajānandasvami sarvānnijāshritān nānādeshasthitān shikshāpatrīm vrttālayasthitah

Verse 3: bhātro rāmpratāpechhārāmayodharmajanmanoh yāvayodhyāpras ādākhyaraghuvirābhidau sutau

Verse 4. mukundānandamukhyāścha naisthikā brahmchārinah grhasthāścha mayarāmabhattādya ye madāshrayāh

Verse 5. sadhavā vidhavā yoshā yāshcha macchishyatāmgatāh muktānan dādayo ye syuh sādhavashcākhilā api

Verse 6: svadharmarakshikā me taih sarvairvāchyah sadāshishāh shr Iman nārāyanasmrtyā sahitāh shāstrasammatāh.

54. This would not be surprising, considering that sectarian movements were often instigators of the Sanskritization process. Srinivas's definition is the following: "Sanskritization may be briefly defined as the process by which a 'low' caste or tribe or other group takes over the customs, rituals, beliefs, ideology, and style of a high and in particular, 'twice-born' caste. The Sanskritization of a group has usually the effect of improving its position in the local caste hierarchy." M. N. Srinivas, *The Cohesive Role of Sanskritization and Other Essays* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989), 56–57.

55. In terms of the approach to different deities of the Hindu pantheon, Sahajanand seems to have adopted a henotheistic mode of worship, which forms another way in which processes of Sanskritization works within sectarian movements. Srinivas explains: "It is in sectarian Hinduism that a spirit of exclusiveness is visible, but even there it is not great enough to insist on the exclusive propitiation of only one god": ibid., 60.

56. Verse 11: kasyāpi prānino himsā nasva kāryatra māmakaih, sukshmayu kāmatkunāderapi buddhacyā kadāchan

Verse 12: devatāpitṛyāgārthampaśvādeśhcha himsanam na kartavyam ahimsaiva dharmah prokto asti yanmahān.

57. The only version of the Imamshah *Shikshāpatrī* available in print is a translation by S. Noor Ali Shah in *Collectanea: Volume I, Series A*, No. 2 (Leiden: Published for the Ismaili Society by E. J. Brill [1948]). Contents (entries): "Satpanth (Indian Ismailism)" by W. Ivanow, "Some Specimens of Satpanth Literature," translated by V. H. Hooda; "Holy Shikshapatri" by S. Noor Ali Shah, "An Ali-Ilahi Fragment" by W. Ivanow. There is no record of the official manuscript status of *Shikshāpatrī* and *So Kiriyā*. For the points of comparison between the Satpanth and Swami Narayan texts, I worked with the transliteration and translation of *So Kiriyā* found in *Ismaili Hymns from South Asia* and the translation of the Marathi *Shikshapatri* attributed to Imam Shah found translated by Noor Ali Shah in Ivanow's *Collectanea* volume.

58. According to W. Ivanow, this Satpanth *Shikshāpatrī* is the name of the Marathi version of the *ginān* and *So Kiriyā* is the name of the Gujarati one, for he states, "As the reader may see, the main portion of the *Shikshapatri* is practically the same as that of the Sau-Kiriya." He also describes how "the text of the *Shikshapatri* is in Marathi, and is used by the Eastern Satpanth branch. The followers of that branch are found in East Khandesh, i.e., the district of Burhanpur, but there are also many scattered in other districts of East Khandesh as also in those of West Khandesh, Nimar and Berar (Akola, Amraoti, Malkapur, and Buldhana). The author of this translation, who is at present the pir of the sect residing in Bahadurpur, a short distance from Burhanpur, is a well-educated young man who takes a keen interest in the study of the history of the community of which he is now the head": 145.

Translators of the *ginān*s. Christopher Shackle and Zawahir Moir describe the *ginān So Kiriyā* ([100 Good Deeds]) in the following way: "Atypical in its structure and in the detail of its contents, the So Kiriya is not nowadays sung. Perhaps it never was, since the bald prescriptions of its rhyming couplets, written in prosaic Gujarati, suggest its having been originally devised as a summary reference manual of conduct": Shackle and Moir, *Ismaili Hymns from South Asia* (1992), 145.

59. Shackle and Moir, *Ismaili Hymns from South Asia* (1992), 145–147.

60. Verse 6: svadharmarakṣh kā me taih sarvairvāchyah sadāshishāh shrīmannārāyaṇasmṛtyā sahitāh shāstrasammatāh

Sahajanand and Keshavjivandas, *Shikshapatri, a Compendium of the Code of Conduct* (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1968).

61. In *So Kiriyā*, hing ramākun na khāre purani ("Do not consume asafoetida or tobacco") and in the Satpanth *Shikshāpatrī* translation, "Do not eat onions and garlic" (*kiriyā* 93): 144.

62. Verse 18: vyabhichāro na kartavyah pumbhih strībhishcha mām shritaih; dyūtādivyasanam tyājyam nādyam bhangādimādakam

("Going astray (adultery) ought not to be done by followers, men and women. Gambling and similar vices ought to be relinquished, along with bhang and tobacco.")

Verse 186: charmavāro na vai peyam jātyā viprena kenachit pañchanadyādyam cha tena bhakṣham na sarvathā

("Brahmin Jains are not to drink from leather-skinned vessels, and eat onions, garlic and similar foods.")

63. *So Kiriyā* states, "jiv jant na mārne jān," and in the Satpanth *Shikshāpatrī*, "never intentionally kill any living being." For the Swami Narayan discussion of killing, see below, note 67.

64. In the Satpanth *So Kiriyā*, par-istari sathe gave na karie ("Do not have intercourse with another's wife"). And in the Satpanth *Shikshāpatrī*, *kiriyā* 27, ("Never have intercourse with other people's wives"), 142. See note 62 for the Swami Narayan.

65. *Kiriyā* 78, "Juva juvāvato no ramie sadh."

66. *So Kiriyā* states, jher khai jhapaṇai je jiv marasc, te avagaman pharī avatarasc" ("Those who die by taking poison or by taking unnecessary risks will be born again"). The Satpanth *Shikshāpatrī* states, "Do not kill thyself by poison or drowning; in such a case thou wilt be re-born, and wilt come back to this world." 144.

67. Verse 14: ātmaghātastu tirth'pi kartavyah cha na kvchi nyogyāchāranārkvāpi na vishodabandhanādinā

68. *Kiriyās* 43–49 in *So Kiriyā*:

medāne jai pāne ācharam karie, pāni jāne lagani to, karie
achāram cran karava sahi, asudh deh rākhavi nahin
mōt jāne dhova hāth nahi kare to nahin rhāek pāk
van gāhan na pavun nan

69. Verse 49: prāyaśham tu prabuddhavyam pūrvamevodayādravah vidhāya kṛishnasmaraṇam kāryah shauchavidhitatah

Verse 501: upavishyaiva chaikatra karttavyam dantadhavanam snātvā shuchyambunā dhaute paridhārya cha vāsasi

Verse 51: upavishya tatah shudha āsane shuchibhūte asankīrnā upaspṛshyam prāngamukham kottarāmukham

70. *Kiriyā* 63, nice sangati virā chālavun nāhi

71. *Shikshāpatrī*, verse 27: chorapāpvyasanānām sangah pāshandinām tathā kāminām ca na kartavyo jñānvancanakarmaṇām

72. *Kiriyās* 27 and 28, ochun kene virā ālavun nathu adhakun kenun virā levun nāhi
Kiriyā 42, juthu khat na tākhit sat
Kiriyā 38, kanchā tani rakhe dravā khātā
Kiriyās 71 and 72, pārakun dhan lai bhāgavun panhi putar thaine devun sah

73. 143: sasākshyamantarā lekhām putrapautrādinā 'pi cha buhvittadānādānābhyām vyavahārya na karhi chit

144: kārye vaivāhike svasyānyasya varyapyadhanasya tu bhāshābandho na karttavyah sasākshyam lekhamantarā

145. āyadravyānusārena vyayah kāryo hi sarvadā anyathā tu mahaddukham bhaveditvavadhārvatām

146: dravyasyāyo bhavedyāvān vyayo vā vyāvahārike tau samasmṛtya svayam lekhyau svakṣharaih prativāsaram

147: nijavittyudyamprāptadhanadhānyānyāditeshcham taih arpyo dashāmsah kṛishnāya viṃshom shasitviha durbalaih

74. See the similar topics of discussion in the *Shikshāpatri* and Bishop Heber and the East India Company official's account of Swami Narayan rules and practices in the 1820s.
75. Both of these points—about the primacy of *Shikshāpatri* as a text and its function in ritual—are discussed in the *Vachanamrut* itself: "The Shikshapatri, which has been written by me should be read daily. Those who cannot read should hear it from someone. If that is not possible, they should offer worship to it as prescribed in the Shikshapatri." Vachanamrut, Gadhada 1.21, 1.
76. Harjot Oberoi, "The Making of a Religious Paradox: Sikh, Khalsa, Sahajdhari as Modes of Early Sikh Identity," in David Lorenzen's *Bhakti Religion in North India: Community Identity and Political Action* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1995), 43.
77. Ibid., 48.
78. Ibid.
79. Metcalf states, "What gave thagi its distinctive appeal was rather the way it enabled the British to give voice to their own enduring fears and anxieties. Thagi thus became a metaphor for the representation of what they feared most in India, the ability to know and control their colonial subjects": Thomas R. Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 41.

5 Sect and Secularism in the Early Nationalist Period

The epigraph is from Muhammad Shah (Aga Khan III), quoted in Gulshan Khakee, "The Deesavatar of the Satpanth Ismailis and the Imam Shahs of Indo-Pakistan" (unpublished thesis, Harvard University, 1972).

1. Faisal Devji, "Minority as a Political Form," in Dipesh Chakrabarty, Rochana Majumdar, and Andrew Sartori, eds., *From the Colonial to the Postcolonial: India and Pakistan in Transition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 89–90.
2. As Talal Asad explains, "Secularism as a political doctrine arose in modern Euro-America. It is easy to think of it as requiring the separation of religious from secular institutions in government, but that is not all it is. Abstractly stated, examples of this separation can be found in medieval Christendom and in the Islamic empires—and no doubt elsewhere too. What is distinctive about "secularism" is that it presupposes new concepts of 'religion,' 'ethics,' and politics, and new imperatives associated with them": *Formations of the Secular* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 1–2.
3. Asad describes the secular as a "concept that brings together certain behaviors, knowledges, and sensibilities in modern life. . . . To appreciate this it is not enough to show that what appears to be necessary is really contingent—that in certain respects 'the secular' obviously overlaps with the 'religious.' It is a matter of showing how contingencies relate to changes in the grammar of concepts—that is, how the changes in concepts articulate changes in practices. . . . In my view the secular is neither singular in origin nor stable in its historical identity, although it works through a series of particular oppositions": Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular*, 25–26.

4. This idea of "dissonant" religion comes from Gauri Viswanathan, who, in a recent essay, has asked the question of what secularism would look like if seen through a history omitted from its own narrative. Her discussion comes from that of literary studies, which, she explains, has naturalized the logic of the secularization thesis that has been resisted and critically interrogated by sociologists, anthropologists, and scholars of religion. Viswanathan attributes this lacuna to the problem that "secularism is conceived to be the inaugural moment of literature's formation, a defining aspect of its identity, whose religious traces are no more than a historical reminder of a displaced worldview." As a way to undo the normative position secularism has occupied in literary studies, Viswanathan calls for an interrogation of those aspects of religion that have been effaced in process, what she describes as "dissonant strains" of religious heterodoxy that have been occluded in the secular narrative: Gauri Viswanathan, "Secularism in the Framework of Heterodoxy," in *PMLA* 123, no. 2 (2008): 466–476.
5. Partha Chatterjee, *Nation and Its Fragments* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 26.
6. Aamir Mufti, *Enlightenment in the Colony: The Jewish Question and the Crisis of Postcolonial Culture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007).
7. W. W. Hunter, *The Indian Musalmans* (London: Trubner and Co., 1871), 33.
8. Ibid.
9. Jawaharlal Nehru, *Discovery of India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989), 390.
10. Ibid.
11. Hajy Bibi v. H. H. Sir Sultan Mahomed Shah, the Aga Khan (1908), 11 Bombay Law Reports.
12. Soumen Mukherjee, "Being 'Ismaili' and 'Muslim': Some Observations on the Politico-Religious Career of Aga Khan III," in *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* 34, no. 2 (2011): 198–199.
13. Aga Khan III, "Presidential Address to the All India Muhammadan Educational Conference: Delhi 1902," in K. K. Aziz, ed., *Aga Khan III: Selected Speeches and Writings of Sir Sultan Muhammad Shah* (London: Kegan Paul International, 1998), 205–210.
14. Ibid., 206.
15. Ibid.
16. Ibid., 207.
17. Ibid.
18. Ibid.
19. Ibid., 209.
20. Ibid., 210.
21. Ibid.
22. Ibid.
23. Michel Boivin, "The Reform of Islam in Ismaili Shi'ism from 1885 to 1957," in Francoise 'Nalini' Delvoye, ed., *Confluence of Cultures: French Contributions to Indo-Persian Studies* (Delhi: Manohar, 1994), 202.
24. Ibid., 204.
25. Charles Kurzman, *Modernist Islam, 1840–1940: A Sourcebook* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

26. Peter Hardy, "Modern European and Muslim Explanations of Conversion to Islam in South Asia. A Preliminary Survey of the Literature," in Nehemia Levtzion, ed., *Conversion to Islam* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1979), 79.
27. See Cohn, "The Census"; Dirks, *Castes of Mind*; and Jones, "Religious Identity."
28. Anuradha Dingwaney Needham and Rajeswari Sundar Rajan, *The Crisis of Secularism in India* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 13.
29. Documents such as a letter to *The Pioneer* on 16 August 1903 and to the *Aligarh Institute Gazette* that same month stress issues such as the importance of recognizing Muslim representation, the beneficence of British rule, and the importance of Muslims in "keeping themselves aloof from the Indian National Congress": N/A. "Mahommedan Political Association. Nawab Viqaru-l Mulk to Editor," and *The Pioneer*, 16 August 1903, in Sharif Al Mujahid (ed.), *Muslim League Documents: 1900–1947* (Karachi: Quaid-i-Azam Academy, 1990), 29.
30. The Aga Khan was the head negotiator in this exchange, as the first signature to "Address presented by the Mohammedan Deputation to Lord Minto, Simla, 1 October 1906," is that of the Aga Khan's (ibid., 95–102).
31. By 1909, Viceroy Minto formerly institutionalized this request for a separate electorate for Muslims in what became known as The Morley-Minto reforms of 1909. The Morley-Minto Reforms followed from three important events: first, the partition of Bengal in 1905 led by Western-educated Brahmins, which prompted colonial officials to seek a balance of loyalty from loyal and conservative sections of society: Muslims and landlords; second, the greater demands of Congress, led by Gokhale; and third, the pressure from a group of Muslims to state their case that Muslims, on account of their minority status in India, ought to be considered an electoral category in the r own right. Shabnum Tejani, "Reflections on the Category of Secularism in India: Gandhi, Ambedkar, and the Ethics of Communal Representation," in Rajeshwari Sundar Rajan and Anuradha Dingwaney Needham, eds., *The Crisis of Secularism in India* (Durham: Duke University Press), 48.
32. This position can be traced to a much earlier period than the Morley-Minto Reforms. In a speech that took up the question of the empire's rule, Syed Ahmad has stated that since foreigners will necessarily rule India, all other foreigners—Russians, French, Germans—are much worse. Thus, "It is therefore necessary that for the peace of India and the progress of everything in India the English Government should remains for many years—in fact for ever": Sir Syed Ahmed Khan's Speech, Meerut, 16 March 1888, in *Muslim League Documents*, 207.
33. David Gilmartin, *Empire and Islam: Punjab and the Making of Pakistan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 3.
34. Francis Robinson, "Islam and Muslim Separatism," in David Taylor and Malcolm Yapp, eds., *Political Identity in South Asia* (London: Curzon Press, 1979), 78–112.
35. Paul Brass, *Language, Religion, and Politics in North India* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1974).
36. Ayesha Jalal, *The Sole Spokesman: Jinnah, the Muslim League and the Demand for Pakistan* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Yasmin

Khan, *The Great Partition: The Making of India and Pakistan* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007); Vazira Fazila-Yacoobali Zamindar, *The Long Partition and the Making of Modern South Asia. Refugees, Boundaries, Histories* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007).
37. Mufti, *Enlightenment in the Colony*, 12–13.
38. Talal Asad defines the secular as an idea that is undoubtedly driven by a set of values that "bring together certain behaviors, knowledges, and sensibilities in modern life." Asad, *Formations of the Secular*, 25.
39. Asad describes the concept of the secular as "neither singular in origin nor stable in its historical identity, although it works through a series of oppositions": ibid., 25.
40. For further discussion of the social and religious reforms Muhammad Shah mandated for the Isma'ili community during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, see Michel Boivin, *Le Renovation du Shi'ism Ismaelien en Inde et au Pakistan. D Apres les ecrits et les discours de Sultan Muhammad Shah Aga Khan* (New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003).
41. Khakee, "The Dasavatara of the Satpanth Ismailis," 61.
42. Boivin explains that in the invocation section, the old version was addressed to Nakalanki (the final avatar), whereas the reformed version was directed to God, Muhammad, and the Isma'ili imams. Michel Boivin, "Managing the Heritage through the Rituals: Sindhi Culture and Ismaili Identity among the Khoja," unpublished paper, April 25, 2003.
43. According to Azim Nanji, "The Constitution of 1905 was therefore meant to provide a framework that would apply to the community and act as a safety valve against seceders who might lay claim to communa property." Nanji, quoted in Boivin, *Le Renovation du Shi'ism ismaelien en Inde et au Pakistan*, 274.
44. An Open Letter to His Highness the Aga Khan, published by Karim Goolamali (Karachi: Kohinoor Printing Works, 1917), 1.
45. Ibid.
46. The *Memoirs of the Aga Khan. World Enough and Time* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1954), 187.
47. *An Open Letter to His Highness the Aga Khan*, published by Karim Goolamali (Karachi: Kohinoor Printing Works, 1917), 4.
48. Ibid., 5.
49. Ibid.
50. Ibid.
51. Ibid., 25.
52. Ibid., 15.
53. Ibid., 15.
54. Boivin explains that certain "offering rituals" of Khoja practice were not always directed to the Aga Khan or an imam. It was possible for a Khoja to give offerings to a local guru, for example. With legitimization of the Aga Khan authority, however, this tradition of offering rituals was directed solely to the imam. Michel Boivin, "Managing the Heritage through the Rituals: Sindhi Culture and Ismaili Identity among the Khoja," unpublished paper, April 25, 2003, 4.

55. The authors explain that these editions, printed in both Khojki and Gujarati script, were regarded as canonical within the Isma'ili community until their revisions were undertaken in 1978–79. See Shackle and Moir, *Ismaili Hymns from South Asia* (1992), 16–17.

56. In the supplementary notes to the translated *gināns* collection, Christopher Shackle and Zawahir Moir describe this particular *ginān*, "Enthronement Hymn," in the following way: "This hymn of praise to the imam is sung in the congregations every year on Imamate Day, celebrating the anniversary of the current Aga Khan's accession. With the accession of Aga Khan IV in 1957, the words mahamad shāh [10:1, 10:3] were changed to karim shāh. It was probably composed in 1885 when Sir Sultan Muhammad Shah Aga Khan III (1877–1957) ascended the throne of the imamate as a boy, after the premature death of his father Aga Ali Shah Aga Khan II, although there is an alternative tradition that it was composed on the slightly later occasion of Aga Khan III's first marriage. At all events, this is the most recently composed of all the recognized hymns." See Shackle and Moir, *Ismaili Hymns from South Asia* (1992), 165.

57. "Mubārakī dhanī salāmat je takhat ji"
yā ali khub majālas jinat kar-ke, phiras bichāi gāli
ān baethe haye takhat upar, sulatān mahamad shāhā vāli
āj rāj mubārak hove, nur aen ali kun rāj mubārak hove,
shāha ā -e nabi kun rāj mubārak hove, hove hove āj rāj mubārak hove
yā ali didār tene kun āe shāhā teri, hindi jamāet sāri;
shāhā bajā-kar najarān deve, jān apani kun vār
yā ali terā nasibā roj-e-aval se, detā hae re kamāli,
shāhā ali shāhā ke mukh men se nikalā, sultān mahamad shāhā vāli.
yā ali shāhā kahu to tunjh kun bajāve, bakhat buland peshani;
choti umar men āie maratabā, talu ki n shāni
yā ali takhat ne chatr tunjh kun mubārak, jeherā p ke piyare;
abul hasan shāha karani so teri, janat āp savāre
yā ali takhat ne chatr sun-ke tere, phalak se barasa nurā
mori tabākā hāthun men le-kar, shāhā kun vadhāve hurān
yā ali mehemān-khāne men moman kun jab, lāe id musale
shamasi jo salavāt padh-kar, māraphat ki khusiyāli
yā ali teri mubārak-bādi ke khātar, sayad karate munājāt
shāhā najaph tere pushat-panah, tere dushaman hoy phanā

Transliterated and translated by Shackle and Moir, *Ismaili Hymns from South Asia* (1992), 82–83.

58. Giorgio Agamben, *The Time That Remains: A Commentary on the Letter to the Romans* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), 1.

59. Ibid., 2.

60. Agamben explains that "To be messianic, to live in the Messiah signifies the expropriation of each and every juridical-factical property (circumcised/uncircumcised; free/slave; man/woman). This expropriation does not, however, found a new identity; 'the new creature' is none other than the use and messianic vocation of the old. " Ibid., 16.

61. Ibid., 24.

62. te popata rupe gura pīra samasa thaeā, jīhā surajā rānī hotī tene sata khane tīhā popata rupe hoi pīra samasa bhane
jīhā suraja rānī bethi che sata khanāe; tīhā popata rupe hoi pīra samasa bhanee
tame suno suraja rānī atharaveda bharana gināna, jethī tame pāo āgara pāo amarāpurino thāma
aja tu rānī radya dhuāra daita ghara āi; have taro anama varāratha gaeo
eso vacana sunine suraja rānī acabi raheā, rānī te gura popatane pīra samasane lāgā jāi pāheā
rabha pīra samasa boleā vasāta; tume suno surajā rānī athara vedakī vāta
rāni amāre karatā juga māhe rugha veda vepāra; te bagata pāmce koriese sidho pralhāda
te juga māhe cāra rupa harie dharea; deva chāra dānava sāhe āpe saghāreā
rani tame dujā tretā juga māhe āna; tare jujara ved hotā paramāna
tare deve sāte kirorīsu bhagata udhāreā hirīcadra te juga māhe trana dānava sāhe ape saghareā
rani trija duāpura jugano sebana jāna; tare sāma veda hotā paramāna
nava kirorīso pādhava udhareā, te juga māhe deva doe dānava shāha ape saghāreā
te nave kirorīese sidhā jujosatara rāe, te pāmeā amarapurinā thāma
āja kalijuga māhe athara veda māhe thāra, te āja kalajuga māhe harī dasmu avatāra
te deva nakalakī avatāra dhareo sirī murāra; te tone bharathāra mare ho nāra

Khakee, "The Dasavatara of the Satpanth: Ismailis," 75–86.

63. te tame suno surajā rānī pīra samasa kahe vīcāra: āja rānī tame juga māhe satapantha dhiāvo sāra
te rānī āge satapanth vina sidhā na koe; te tume rānī satagura vinā mugata na hoe
rani ā jugamā satapanth a dhyāvo sāra, to teme surajā rānī utaro pāra
rāni tame pārajo satapatha gubataja hoi; jema daita dānava na jāne koi

[redacted], 89–91.

64. je sāmī purabha janamanī sirevā ama siri rahī: te sāmī ame daita dānava ghara āveā sahi

Ibid., 103.

65. sāmī te ghara janamma bhareā; pana ame satagura sārathī amara thaeā

Ibid., 105.

66. A similar phenomenon is at work in the *Buddhavatar ginān* as well. In the discussion about what constitutes "chandal," the Buddha explains that divine essence has left the Brahmins and has taken the form of the Prophet Muhammad (verses 35–39). In the rest of the poem, Brahmanic authority is undermined by the new Satpanth teaching, thereby "hollowing out" the Vedic power structures.

67. Ibid., 4–5.
68. Sheldon Pollock, "The Cosmopolitan Vernacular," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 57 (February 1998)
69. te ā dasamo āvatārnā vacanam mā cāle nara ne nāra; te āvagamanna nā pade samsāra
    je koī īmansu srī nārāyanena devano dasamo āvatāra puro sāmale bhane nara ne nāra; tene māhādīnamnī ācam nā lāge lagāra.
    Khakee, "The Dasavatara of the Satpanthi Ismailis," 466–467.
70. Jacob Taubes explains, "From a geometrical point of view, time runs in a straight line in one direction. The direction of this straight line is irreversible. The direction is always toward and end; otherwise, it would be directionless. The end is essentially Eschaton." Taubes, *Occidental Eschatology*, 3.
71. This is the language deployed by Arnould but, as discussed earlier, it also forms the logic of sectarian interpretations of *gināns* as well.
72. Quoted in Boivin, *Le Renovation du Shi'ism Ismaelien en Inde et au Pakistan*, 277
73. This passage is part of a farman composed on 20 February 1910, in Rajkot, India, which appears in a book called Khangi Farman ("secret pronouncements"): Maherally, Akbarally *Understanding Ismailism. A Unique Tariqah of Islam* (Burnaby: A. M. Trust, 1988), 135–136.

Conclusion

1. Richard Eaton, "Approaches to the Study of Conversion to Islam in India," in *Religious Movements in South Asia 600–1800*, ed. David Lorenzen (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2004).
2. Carl Ernst, *Following Muhammad. Rethinking Islam in the Contemporary World* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 66
3. Carl Ernst contends, "Islam was just as much a newly invented European term as 'Hinduism' and 'Buddhism.'" Ibid., 10–11
4. Ibid.
5. "Answer of Jamal al-Din to Renan," quoted in Charles Kurzman, *Modernist Islam 1840–1940* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 108
6. Ernst, *Following Muhammad*, 11
7. Perry, *Cases Illustrative of Oriental Life*, 112–113
8. Dirks, *Castes of Mind*, 198
9. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (New York: Verso Press, 1983), 169.
10. *Gazetteer of the Bombay Presidency, Volume IX, Part II, Gujarat Population. Musalmans and Parsis*, ed. James M. Campbell (Bombay: Government Central Press, 1899), 46.
11. Dirks, *Castes of Mind*, 255.

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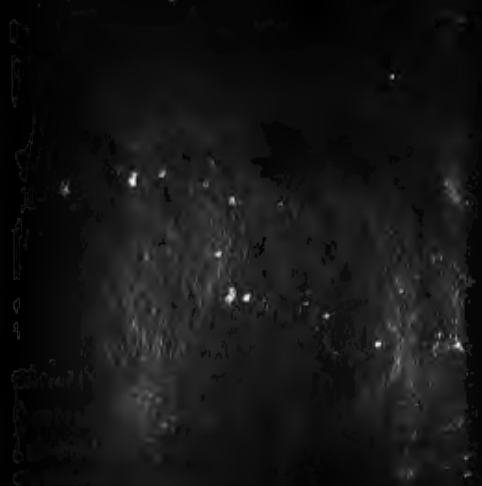

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